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TIBETAN TRIANGLE
German, Tibetan and British Relations in the Context of Ernst Schäfer's Expedition, 1938-1939

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It's a funny old game. We want to study the world of insects, while British generals sit in India wagging their heads and worrying that the Nazi expedition could set the Empire aflame from the icy deserts of Tibet. ERNST SCHÄFER[1]

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to view German-Tibetan-British relations in the context of the Ernst-Schäfer-Tibet-Expedition of 1938/39. All its members were officers of the SS. The expedition was the first scientific German expedition to receive an official invitation to Lhasa from the Tibetan government.

After briefly outlining Ernst Schäfer's scientific career, I intend to focus on the expedition's planning and objectives, and a short description of the expedition to demonstrate that the 1938/39 Tibet expedition, although planned by its members as a purely scientific venture actually fell into the area of conflict between politics and science from the very outset of its planning stage. The paper will then turn to the expedition's relationship to the Regent, Reting Rinpoche and a discussion of the letters the Regent wrote to Hitler. The paper subsequently attempts to present the expedition in the field of conflict between the German, Tibetan and English standpoints.

1 Ernst SCHÄFER, Unpublished and hand-written notes, Library of Congress, Washington, Manuscript Divsion, German Captured Documents, Container 828, Reel 492. This bulk of handwritten notes on microfilms is in great disorder, and as the folios are unnumbered by the Library, no folio numbers can be given. (Henceforth quoted as Library of Congress and the reel number).

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1. Introduction

1.1 Preliminary remarks

Recent years have seen growing international interest in one of the 20th century's most controversial Tibetan expeditions of over 60 years ago: Ernst Schäfer's Tibetan expedition of 1938/1939.

What is it about this expedition that fascinates and electrifies us now, or triggers such controversy? For discussions do not centre on the expedition's actual - and important – scientific findings. There was nothing singular or spectacular about the expedition from a technical point of view; nothing to compare with the adventures experienced by, say, Sven Hedin or Wilhelm Filchner. It involved little uncharted territory, explored few new routes, no expedition members were ambushed by predatory tribes, and no-one was killed. Even Ernst Schäfer's earlier expeditions to Eastern Tibet had involved considerably more adventure and excitement.

The expedition's spectacular aspect concerns the era in which it took place, shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War, and the uniquely explosive political feature that all its members were officers of the SS. The expedition was the first scientific German expedition to receive an official invitation to Lhasa from the Tibetan government, and its members were finally permitted to stay in the Tibetan capital for two full months. Given the Tibetan government's strict policy of refusal of entry to foreigners in the 1930s, this fact alone is a minor sensation. The fraught and complex state of Anglo-German relations at the time generated further tension.

To date the expedition, the declared aim of which was the gathering of new research findings in several disciplines, primarily in the field of natural sciences such as geology, biology, medicine etc., had largely been forgotten. Another forgotten aspect is that its members collected a quite astonishing quantity of scientific material, some of which still awaits analysis.

Only popular scientific and esoteric literature has long cited the expedition in repeated attempts to establish new, far-fetched connections between the Third Reich and Tibet and occult relationships between Hitler and Tibet in particular, and also as a model with which to instrumentalise the Tibetans' friendship with the Nazis.[2] The majority of more recent publications also fall into this category

2 E.g. Louis PAUWELS, *Gurdjieff.* Douglas, Isle of Man, 1964; Louis PAUWELS and Jaques BERGIER, *The Morning of the Magicians.* New York 1964; Trevor RAVENSCROFT, *The Spear*

or can be classified as ideological preconceptions.[3] Exceptions are Reinhard Greve,[4] Martin Brauen[5] and Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke[6] and in some ways James Cooper.[7]

1.2 On methodology

Our theme can be seen in the light of Thomas Nipperdey's vivid formulation:

> We have always railed against the un-historical anachronism, against the application of yardsticks from without and in retrospect, against the moralisation of good and evil..., against criticism of the past in the name of an ideally located future or present. It is not the historian's task to show the way things were not but should have been... Historians that strive to do justice to the past surrender to deliberation, to On-the-one-hand and On-the-other-hand, to the counter of And-yet, the limitation of Admittedly, the dichotomy of Both-and; they emphasise the ambiguities, the ambivalences of reality and the assumed systems of reality ... The fundamental colours of history are not black and white, its fundamental pattern not the contrasts of a chessboard; history's fundamental colour is grey, in an infinite range of shades.[8]

of Destiny: The Occult Power Behind the Spear, which Pierced the Side of Christ. New York 1973; Dietrich BRONDER, *Bevor Hitler kam: Eine historische Studie.* Genève 1975; Adolphe D. GRAD, *Le temps kabbaliste.* Neuchâtel 1967; Jean-Michel ANGEBERT, *The Occult and the Third Reich: The Mystical Origins of Nazism and the Search for the Holy Grail.* New York 1974; J. H. BRENNAN, *The Occult Reich.* New York 1974; Gerald SUSTER, *Hitler, the Occult Messiah.* New York 1981; Lee FEIGON, *Demystifying Tibet.* Chicago 1996.

3 Victor und Victoria TRIMONDI, *Hitler, Buddha, Krishna: Eine unheilige Allianz vom Dritten Reich bis heute.* Wien 2002:115-174; Christopher HALE, *Himmler's Crusade: The true story of the 1938 Nazi expedition into Tibet*, London 2003.

4 Reinhard GREVE, Tibetforschung im SS-Ahnenerbe. In: *Lebenslust und Fremdenfurcht*, ed. Thomas HAUSCHILD, Frankfurt 1995:168-199.

5 Martin BRAUEN, *Traumwelt Tibet*, Bern 2000:53-81; (English translation: *Dreamworld Tibet: Western Illusions*, Bangkok: Weatherhill, forthcoming); the master thesis of Mark J. ROGERS, *The SS-Ahnenerbe and the 1938/39 German-Tibet Expedition*, Atlanta: Georgia State University, M.A. Thesis 2000, mainly contains a retelling of Ernst SCHÄFER, *Geheimnis Tibet: Bericht der deutschen Tibet-Expedition Ernst Schäfer*, München 1943.

6 Nicholas GOODRICK-CLARKE, *Black Sun: Aryan Cults, Esoteric Nazism and the Politics of Identity*, New York 2002:107-127; ID., *The Occult Roots of Nazism*, New York 1992:217-225.

7 James COOPER, The Swastika & Tibet. *The Tibetan Review* 36 (July 2001):19-23.

8 Thomas NIPPERDEY, *Deutsche Geschichte.* Vol. 3, München, 1992: 888, 891, 905.

Doubtless this attempt can still be regarded in the "process of fact-oriented reconstruction, only the conclusion of which truly enables research into causes to be conducted."[9] The attempt should be made to present the expedition in comparison and "in relation to contemporary conditions, paths of thought and values,"[10] rooted in both a viewpoint of objective distance and an understanding of the conditions of life and scope for action[11] under a dictatorship as a horizon of interpretation,[12] and in order to avoid a "template of good and evil that delivers little scientific information."[13] By applying this process to place events in context, ahistorical moralism is avoided and a more balanced assessment of the protagonists, their "actions, their merits, achievements and weaknesses, against a contemporary background"[14] is achieved.

1.3 Outline

After briefly outlining Ernst Schäfer's scientific career, I intend to focus on the expedition's planning and objectives[15], to demonstrate that the 1938/39 Tibet expedition, although planned by its members as a purely scientific venture in

9 Frank-Rutger HAUSMANN (ed.), *Die Rolle der Geisteswissenschaften im Dritten Reich 1933-1945*. München 2002:XXIII.

10 Johannes FRIED, Eröffnungsansprache auf dem 42. Deutschen Historikertag. In: *Intentionen - Wirklichkeiten/ 42. Deutscher Historikertag in Frankfurt am Main, 8.-11. September 1998*, Berichtsband, Marie-Luise RECKER (ed.), München 1999: 4, 6. "Searching for racist quotations is not enough."

11 On the complex issues, see also the Introduction and Conclusion of: UNABHÄNGIGE EXPERTENKOMMISSION SCHWEIZ – ZWEITER WELTKRIEG, *Die Schweiz, der Nationalsozialismus und der Zweite Weltkrieg: Schlussbericht*. Zürich 2002.

12 Ulrich SIEG, Strukturwandel der Wissenschaft im Nationalsozialismus. *Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte* 24 (2001):255-270: 256.

13 Jürgen ELWERT, Geschichtswissenschaft. In: HAUSMANN (ed.), 2002:113.

14 "As a historian one cannot refrain from understanding individual statements in their context and treating the protagonists in their own era, also in comparison to others and in comparison to the customary linguistic usage of the time. (n. 11: Such a contextualisation corresponds to scientific historical works and the principles of historic justice; however, contextualisation does not lead to apology or trivialisation. Thus it is only contextualisation that enables a just assessment of individuals to be made)", Jürgen KOCKA, Zwischen Nationalsozialismus und Bundesrepublik. In: *Deutsche Historiker im Nationalsozialismus*. Winfried SCHULZE and Otto Gerhard OEXLE (eds.), 2nd ed. Frankfurt 2000:343.

15 I have concentrated particularly on describing the anthropological goals, since these are still the object of the greatest attention.

comparison to earlier US Tibet expeditions in which Schäfer had participated, actually fell into the area of conflict between politics and science from the very outset of its planning stage. Heinrich Himmler and the "Ahnenerbe" (the SS Ancestral Heritage Society) wanted to influence and determine the venture from a political, esoteric and pseudo-scientific viewpoint. The expedition finally landed in the area of conflict of foreign affairs when official permits were required from the English. At this point it becomes clear to what extent NS foreign policy, political affiliations and propaganda ultimately damaged the expedition's goals and created enormous obstacles. England's political attention to and fears concerning the expedition were in inverse proportion to its size and scientific objectives. I will subsequently attempt to present the expedition in the field of conflict between the contradictory German, Tibetan and English standpoints.

1.4 Sources

In order to follow historical facts as closely as possible in my reconstruction of the expedition, I have largely drawn on unpublished sources, as contemporary as possible, despite the four reports of the expedition published to date.[16] This principally involved the laborious decoding of several hundred pages of Schäfer's diaries and notes, written in scarcely legible Sütterlin script. Further sources of material were the comprehensive collections of archive material belonging to the Sven Hedin Institute, the "Ahnenerbe", the Oriental and India Office Collections of the British Library, Schäfer's unpublished correspondence and the Hugh Richardson Papers in the Bodleian Library.

16 SCHÄFER, 1943; ID., *Fest der weißen Schleier: Eine Forscherfahrt durch Tibet nach Lhasa, der heiligen Stadt des Gottkönigtums*. Braunschweig 1949; ID., *Über den Himalaya ins Land der Götter*. Braunschweig 1950; GEER-BEGER, *Wir ritten nach Lhasa*: Nach dem Tagebuch von Edmund Geer, ergänzt durch Berichte von Dr. Bruno Beger, unter Mitarbeit von Dr. Joseph Knott, Mitglied der Internationalen Expeditionsgesellschaft 1950. Murnau n. d; Bruno BEGER, *Mit der deutschen Tibetexpedition Ernst Schäfer 1938/39 nach Lhasa*. Wiesbaden 1998.

2. Preparations

2.1 Schäfer's scientific career up to 1937

"I was born to be an explorer. There was never any decision to make. I couldn't do anything else and be happy ... The desire to see new places, to discover new facts – the curiosity of life always has been a resistless driving force in me."[17] These words by US explorer Roy Chapman Andrews could have come from Ernst Schäfer.

Schäfer – a brilliant, ambitious, energetic and impulsive man – was born in 1910 in Cologne. After graduating from high school in Mannheim in 1929, he started to study zoology and geology in Göttingen. He had extremely clear ideas of his goals from the outset, writing to the famous ornithologist Erwin Stresemann to outline his ideas for his dissertation subject after only his second semester.[18] In 1930 Brooke Dolan, a rich young American, came to Germany to recruit scientists for his zoological expedition. Although only twenty at the time, Schäfer participated in the first Brooke Dolan expedition to Western China and Tibet, returning to Germany in 1932 to resume his studies.[19] In 1934 he followed the call of Göttingen's mayor to join the SS, probably for career-related reasons and with a clear elitist attitude. "Unlike the 'plebeian' SA, from its early stages the SS was highly attractive to young academics from solid middle-class families, including many law students. Its attraction consisted in both the opportunities it offered for a rapid career and its elitist image."[20] Over 70% of all biologists aged under 40 in 1933 had joined the NSDAP.[21] However, poor career

17 Cited in Charles GALLENLAMP, *Dragon Hunter: Roy Chapman Andrews and the Central Asiatic Expeditions*. New York 2001:3.

18 Schäfer to Stresemann, 23 April 1930, Staatsbibliothek Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Nachlass Erwin Stresemann, (Nachlass 150), Ordner 57, I. (Henceforth quoted as Nachlass Stresemann).

19 Ernst SCHÄFER, *Berge, Buddhas, Bären*. Berlin, 1933.

20 Volker DAHM, In: *Die Tödliche Utopie: Bilder, Texte, Dokumente, Daten zum Dritten Reich*, Horst Möller / Volker Dahm / Hartmut Mehringer (eds.), München 1999:173; This probably also applied to Schäfer: "Young men in particular were fascinated by the radical promises of renewal announced by National Socialism, its promise of ruthless modernity," KOCKA, 2000:343.

21 Ute DEICHMANN, *Biologen unter Hitler*. Frankfurt 1995:257.

prospects for future academics doubtless influenced their decision to join one of the Nazi organisations.[22]

On the one hand Schäfer was driven by an enormous impatience to gain his doctorate as rapidly as possible.[23] On the other hand, however, in 1934, ignoring the advice of his professor Alfred Kühn, he again interrupted his studies to head the second Brooke Dolan expedition to Eastern Tibet and China, concluded in 1936.[24] The great scientific success of this expedition is acknowledged even more than 50 years later in Schäfer's brief obituary in 1992 by the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia. It mentions that Schäfer and Dolan "collected scientific data and specimens of the region's birds and mammals that have never been equalled in size and importance.[25] In recognition of his many scientific contributions Dr. Schafer was elected to life membership in the Academy in 1932."[26] After this expedition, he initially stayed in Shanghai and told the German Consul General Hermann Kriebel[27] of his fears that Germany held no career opportunities for him, thus forcing him to take up negotiations with the USA with a view to an American career. For these negotiations with the Americans to be successful, he required some promises of non-material and financial support from Germany. Evidently impressed by the young explorer's stubbornness and successes, the Consul-General wrote to the German Research Association (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG) and the Deutsche Akademie Mün-

22 E.g. Michael GRÜTTNER, *Studenten im Dritten Reich*. Paderborn 1995:23; Jürgen HAFFER, *Erwin Stresemann, (1889-1972) – Leben und Werk eines Pioniers der wissenschaftlichen Ornithologie*. Halle 2000:143.

23 At the age of 24 before departing on the 2nd. expedition: "My comedy of doctorate will now drag on for a further 2 years... One grows older and older and does not have the time to work in the fields by which one is truly fascinated and interested," Schäfer to Stresemann, 20 February1934, Nachlass Stresemann I.

24 Ernst SCHÄFER, *Unbekanntes Tibet: Durch die Wildnisse Osttibets zum Dach der Erde, Tibetexpedition 1934/36*. Berlin 1937; ID., *Dach der Erde*. Berlin 1938; Brooke DOLAN / Ernst SCHÄFER / Rodolphe MEYER DE SCHAUENSEE, Zoological Results of the Second Dolan Expedition to Western China and Eastern Tibet, 1934-1936. *Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia* 90:159-294.

25 See also a letter of Robert McCracken Peck, Academy of Natural Sciences, of 10 March 1989, to Richardson, in which he mentions that thanks to Schäfer the Museum of the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia owns one of the world's most comprehensive repositories of Tibetan fauna, of, Bodleian Library, MS. OR. Richardson 27, fol. 14.

26 Robert McCracken Peck in "News of the Academy," (undated copy).

27 On Hermann Kriebel, see Astrid FREYEIESEN, *Shanghai und die Politik des Dritten Reiches*. Würzburg 2000:71-77.

chen to enquire about possibilities of such support for Schäfer that would encourage him to turn down offers from the USA and return to Germany.[28]

Schäfer then accompanied Brooke Dolan to the United States in January 1936, to the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia. In Philadelphia he received a telegram from the German government congratulating him on his successes and indicating that his return to Germany was desired. Shortly thereafter, a second cable arrived, informing him that in recognition of the success of his expedition he had been nominated by Himmler as SS Untersturmfuehrer (SS Second Lt.) with retrospective effect from 15 December 1935.[29]

The President of the Deutsche Akademie München, Karl Haushofer, then appealed to the DFG "... that it is in Germany's interest to secure the valuable research findings of this young scholar. The Academy would be extremely pleased to receive notification expressing the desire of the relevant Reich authorities to share in his work."[30] Walter Greite, the biology expert with the DFG, immediately informed Haushofer that the DFG had already taken action, and asked Erwin Stresemann, who was at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia at the same time as Schäfer, to draw up a statement concerning the findings of Schäfer's expedition and his new plans.[31] Stresemann immediately responded, giving an extremely positive assessment of the expedition's findings and warmly applauding Schäfer's plans.[32]

28 "Schäfer now faces the issue of whether to enter the services of America wholly or commit himself to China. In both cases we will lose a man who could become an illustrious ornament of our long line of explorers. However, it is not necessary for us to lose him. His dearest wish is to be the German leader of a German expedition to the region... He has now developed the plan of launching a Sino-German expedition in around two years, together with a young team of German scientists trained by him and – unavoidable these days – in connection with Chinese scientists," Kriebel to DFG, 13 January 1936, Bundesarchiv (henceforth BA) Koblenz, Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, R 73/1498, Akte Ernst Schäfer.

29 BA Berlin, NS 48/69, fol. 287.

30 Haushofer to DFG, 12 February 1936, BA Koblenz, R 73/1498.

31 Greite to Haushofer, 11 February 1936, BA Koblenz, R 73/1498.

32 "Schäfer has an exceptional gift for research travel that demands the full exercise of a strong personality, and throws himself passionately into any task he sets himself. I would wish for nothing more urgent than that he is offered the opportunity in future of travelling in Central Asia on German orders. The way things are here, the Americans will have almost the entire benefit from Schäfer's diligence and take the credit for his successes themselves. Schäfer has a very clear picture of what he wants and where potential success is to be sought. I can therefore commit myself fully to seeing that his applications to further his goals, whatever they may be, are given serious consideration ...It is surely in the national interest of us Ger-

Schäfer evidently received information of his prospective support by the DFG and returned to Germany in April 1936. He resumed his studies in Berlin and completed his doctorate in 1937, no longer with Alfred Kühn in Göttingen on the subject of cleft deer hair, but now with a thesis of unusually comprehensive scope for its time concerning bird life in Tibet with Erwin Stresemann in Berlin.[33]

2.2 Himmler's Ideas

At the time, the "Reichsfuehrer-SS" Himmler was already trying to avail himself of Schäfer's reputation for Nazi propaganda purposes, and in June 1936 Schäfer was summoned by Himmler, who inquired about his future plans. Schäfer told him of his desire to lead a further expedition to Tibet. At this interview, Himmler said that he would like to facilitate Schäfer's future plans for exploration, and that he would take over the sponsorship of Schäfer's next expedition.[34]

Although Himmler believed in the idea of a global battle between "Europe" and "Asia" and viewed "this war as the unquestionably unavoidable sequel to millennia spent in struggling to repel hostile forces that attempt to penetrate the 'heart of Europe' from the steppes of Inner Asia,"[35] he also had a genuine interest in Tibet.[36] He was an adherent of a bizarre mixture of mystical and esoteric ideas,[37] which were laughed at by Hitler.[38] Believing in karma[39] and reincarna-

mans to prevent such powerful gifts from lying fallow or being exploited by others," Stresemann to DFG, 6 March 1936, BA Koblenz, R 73/1498.

33 Ernst SCHÄFER, Ornithologische Ergebnisse zweier Forschungsreisen nach Tibet. *Journal für Ornithologie* 86 (1938), Sonderheft, 349 pp.

34 Final Intelligence Report (OI-FIR/32), "The Activities of Dr. Ernst Schaefer, Tibet Explorer and Scientist with SS-Sponsored Institutes," February 12, 1946, National Archives, Washington, RG 238, M-1270 roll 27, fol. 3.

35 Lothar-Frank KROLL, *Utopie als Ideologie: Geschichtsdenken und politisches Handeln im Dritten Reich*. Paderborn 1998:216.

36 See Sven HEDIN, *Ohne Auftrag in Berlin*. Buenos Aires 1950:140-141.

37 An examination of this aspect of Himmler's character can be found in: Joachim FEST, Die andere Utopie: Eine Studie über Himmler. In: *Fremdheit und Nähe: Von der Gegenwart des Gewesenen*. Stuttgart 1996:138-166.

38 Hitler, who regarded National Socialism as a "cool doctrine of reality derived from the most incisive scientific findings and its expression in thought" (Max DOMARUS, *Hitler, Reden und Proklamationen 1932-1945*, vol I.2, München 1965:893), mocked Himmler's mysticism and his romanticism of the Germanic myths. "What nonsense! Here we have at least reached an age that has all mysticism behind it, and now he wants to start all over again. We might just

tion,[40] which was linked to his cyclical concept of history as recurrence,[41] Himmler appears to have seen himself as a reincarnation of Emperor Henry I.,[42] who lived around the turn of the first millennium and had conquered the Slavs.[43] Possibly Hans Hörbiger's so-called "World Ice Theory",

> with its theory of the recurring battle between ice and fire as the driving force of all cosmic events,[44]

had influenced Himmler in his idea of recurrence.

Himmler was immediately interested in instrumentalising Schäfer for his own interests, asking him

> ... whether I [Schäfer] had met people in Tibet with blonde hair and blue eyes. When I replied in the negative, he questioned me on my opinion of how mankind had come into being. I listed the precise findings of anthropological research, spoke of Pithecanthropus erectus, of Heidelberg and Neanderthal Man and the exciting finds of the French Jesuit father Teilhard de Chardin in the caves of Peking. Himmler listened in silence. Then he shook his head: "Academicians's opinions, book-learning, arrogant university professors enthroned on their chairs like popes ... but without the slightest idea of the true forces that set the world in motion ... Well, that may apply to the inferior races, but the Nordic people came directly from the sky after the last moonfall...You have a lot to learn," continued HH in a pedantic tone,

as well have stayed with the church. At least it had tradition." He found Himmler's image of the original ur-Germanic people equally absurd: "When for example, the Japanese presented [Himmler] with a samurai sword, he at once discovered kinships between Japanese and Teutonic cults and called upon scientists to help him trace these similarities to a racial common denominator," in Albert SPEER, *Inside the Third Reich.* Phoenix 1998:147-148.

39 Yet "Himmler never committed his thoughts to even a roughly cohesive system of thought, nor did he publicise pseudo-scientific investigations. As a result, his philosophy did not receive a universally valid expression which would have familiarised it to a wider contemporary audience. Its official effect was correspondingly small, its scope limited." KROLL, 1998:210.

40 Felix KERSTEN, *The Kersten Memoirs, 1940-1945.* London 1956:149-153.

41 KROLL, 1998:248-251.

42 However, the actual existence of Henry I or Henry the Lion cannot be clarified beyond all doubt. See KERSTEN, 1965:152-153, 296; Michael RIßMANN, *Hitlers Gott: Vorsehungsglaube und Sendungsbewußtsein des deutschen Diktators.* Zürich 2001:264, n. 677; Karl-Heinz JANSSEN, Himmlers Heinrich: Wie ein König des frühen deutschen Mittelalters zum Patron der deutschen Vernichtungspolitik im Osten wurde. *Die Zeit,* (19 October, 2000):84; Helmut ZANDER, *Geschichte der Seelenwanderung in Europa: Alternative religiöse Traditionen von der Antike bis heute.* Darmstadt 1999:564-566.

43 Klaus VOIGTLÄNDER *Die Stiftskirche St. Servatii zu Quedlinburg.* Berlin 1989:39-58.

44 KROLL, 1998:248.

> "principally the runic script and the principles of Indo-Aryan philology. And you must naturally study the works of Hörbiger... The Führer has long been a student of the World Ice Theory.[45] Many remains of the tertiary moon people can still be found, last witnesses of the lost culture of Atlantis that once spanned the world. In Peru, for example, on Easter Island and, as I suspect, in Tibet."[46]

Himmler now also wanted Schäfer to conduct research based on Hörbiger's "World Ice Theory", which stated that Atlantis was destroyed by a mighty flood resulting from the collision of an ice moon with the Earth. "Himmler believed that ancient emigrants from Atlantis had founded a great civilisation in Central Asia."[47] Schäfer, who had no interest in pseudo-science and whose thoughts were wholly occupied with his goals in the field of natural science, persisted in his refusal to allow Edmund Kiss, a disciple of this theory,[48] to join the planned expedition. Although Himmler recognised this, a few weeks later he repeated his attempt to assert his ideas, urging Schäfer to take along an adherent of prehistory and religious science and runic researcher.[49]

2.3 Expedition Plans

As early as August 1936, Schäfer had presented the DFG with a detailed plan of an expedition to Eastern Tibet, including the work of the participating archaeologists, ethnologists, geologists and botanists.

> But the primary focus of the expedition was to be the Amnye Machen region, previously uncharted in every sense of the word. A region that contained the last completely undiscovered area of the Central Asian region from a geographical, but also an ethnological, botanical and faunistic viewpoint... Linking the tertiary Himalayas on the borders of China and the Central Asian highlands, the Amnye Machen region was the retreat of ancient Aryan tribes and endemic life-forms, of the highest anthropological and biological interest, and of far-reaching significance for us Germans.

45 See Brigitte NAGEL, *Die Welteislehre: Ihre Geschichte und ihre Rolle im "Dritten Reich"*, 2nd ed. Stuttgart 2000.

46 Rüdiger SÜNNER, *Schwarze Sonne: Entfesselung und Missbrauch der Mythen im Nationalsozialismus und rechter Esoterik.* Freiburg 1999:48.

47 Final Intelligence Report (OI-FIR/32), "The Activities of Dr. Ernst Schäfer," fols. 3-4.

48 "Then our suggestion of the Government Architectural Officer (Baurat) Kiss was rejected," Sievers to Wolff, 23 January1938, BA Berlin, NS 21/682.

49 Schäfer, *Unpublished Memoirs.*

To this end, plans were made to start from Lanchow and fly over Amnye Machen in a Lufthansa-chartered JU 52 aircraft carrying a full range of film and aerial photography equipment.[50]

In October 1936 Schäfer submitted this slightly revised expedition plan to Himmler.[51]

The idea of Tibet as the origin and point of propagation of many botanical and zoological species and genera, as the key area for issues of tribal history and the retreat of a number of ancient life-forms long extinct in other parts of the world, and of Asia as the cradle of mankind is based on ideas already found in Kant,[52] which the Americans William Diller Matthew and Hernry Fairfield Osborn had taken as a basis for the development of fundamental theories at the start of the 20th century.[53] In addition, Schäfer closely aligned the goals of his expedition to the models and results of American researchers Roy Chapman Andrews and Gordon T. Bowles and the Englishman James H. Edgar.

2.4 *Schäfer's holistic approach*

The primary objective of Schäfer's research - the creation of a complete biological record of Tibet, a synthesis of interrelating natural sciences with their related aspects of the humanities, research into earth – plants – animals – man - was in keeping with his holistic approach.

While this concept was a reaction to his experiences with previous expeditions which had specialised purely in zoology, on the other hand, he followed the intellectual trends of his era in tending to a holistic attitude that was particularly prevalent in the field of biology. The upheavals after the First World War and its

50 26 August 1936, BA Koblenz, R 73/1498.

51 6 October 1936, BA Berlin, NS 21/682.

52 "... to which I add the Northern land of Tibet, perhaps the general retreat of the human race, and its flora after our earth's final revolution ..." Immanuel KANT, Von den verschiedenen Rassen der Menschen, in: *Werke in sechs Bänden*, vol. 6, ed. Wilhelm WEISCHEDEL, Darmstadt 1966:23. See also Ingo WIWJORRA, "Ex oriente lux" – "Ex septembrione lux": Über den Widerstreit zweier Identitätsmythen. In: *Prähistorie und Nationalsozialismus*, Achim LEUBE and Martin HEGEWITSCH (eds.), Heidelberg 2002:73-106: 76-77.

53 See John Fairfield Osborn in Roy Chapman ANDREWS, *On the Trial of Ancient Man*. New York 1926:VIII-IX; William Diller MATTHEW, *Climate and Evolution*. New York 1915, repr. New York 1974:41-42. See also: GELEK, The Tibetan Plateau: One of the Homes of Early Man: In: *Anthropology of Tibet and the Himalaya*, Charles RAMBLE and Martin BRAUEN (eds.), Zürich 1993:73-79.

consequences may also have caused Schäfer, like many intellectuals, to develop a desire to apply the concept of holism in interpreting meanings.[54]

As early as the start of the 20th century, this concept of "holism"[55] had increased its influence on philosophy,[56] law,[57] and the arts,[58] but principally on biology[59] and was already propagated in National Socialism as the counterpart to the forceful reductionism and positivism of natural sciences with their analytical, mechanistic approach. It was closely connected to the concept of synthesis.[60]

Even if Schäfer was "prejudiced by typological ideas that, rooted in political ideology, had gained influence in the biology of the time,"[61] to him the concept of holism primarily meant inter-disciplinarity,[62] more than a kind of surrogate inter-disciplinarity[63] that resembled the concept of Roy Chapman Andrews.[64] As was customary at the time, Schäfer's ecological approach remained a primarily descriptive and comparative one as he attempted to "delineate the types of these overindividual holisms of living space plus living community – greater or smaller – in their characteristic idiosyncrasy."[65]

54 HAUSMANN (ed.), 2002:XI .

55 Anne HARRINGTON, *Reenchanted Science: Holism in German Culture from Wilhelm II. to Hitler*. Princeton 1996; German translation: *Die Suche nach der Ganzheit: Die Geschichte biologisch-psychologischer Ganzheitslehren; Vom Kaiserreich bis zur New-Age-Bewegung*. Reinbek 2002.

56 Monika LESKE, *Philosophen im "Dritten Reich"*. Berlin 1990:135-145.

57 Oliver LEPSIUS, *Die gegensatzaufhebende Begriffsbildung: Methodenentwicklungen in der Weimarer Republik und ihr Verhältnis zur Ideologisierung der Rechtswissenschaft im Nationalsozialismus*. München 1994.

58 HAUSMANN (ed.), 2002, principally the essays of Clemens Knobloch, Otto Gerhard Oexle and Hans-Joachim Dahms.

59 Gottfried ZIRNSTEIN, Grundzüge der Entwicklung der Biologie im Zeitraum zwischen 1917-1945. In: *Beiträge zur Wissenschaft und Gesellschaft 1917-1945*. Berlin 1984:133-145; Günter KÜPPERS / Peter LUNDGREEN / Peter WEINGART, *Umweltforschung – eine gesteuerte Wissenschaft? Eine empirische Studie zum Verhältnis von Wissenschaftsentwicklung Wissenschaftspolitik*. Frankfurt 1978:72-83.

60 Fritz K. RINGER, *The Decline of German Mandarins. The German Academic Community, 1890-1933*. Cambridge, Mass. 1969:384-403, (German translation: *Die Gelehrten: Der Niedergang der deutschen Mandarine 1890-1933*. Stuttgart 1983:344-358.

61 HAFFER, 2000:142, n. 53.

62 Even though criticism of Bruno Beger was partly justified with respect to the selection and assembly of the individual scientific disciplines, BA Berlin, R 135/60, fols. 164740-164742.

63 Clemens KNOBLOCH, Sprachwissenschaft. In: Hausmann (ed.), 2002:319.

64 See Charles GALLENKAMP, 2001:62.

65 August THIENEMANN, *Leben und Umwelt*. Hamburg1956:125.

2.5 *Evaluation*

Schäfer's application was passed to the zoologist Hans Krieg at the Bavarian State Zoological Collection for his appraisal.[66] In December 1937 a final detailed working plan was submitted to the DFG in which Schäfer was still assuming the destination of the expedition to be Eastern Tibet. Schäfer included the following direct quotation[67] from anthropologist Bruno Beger in his plan:

> To date only superficial observations have been made of the origins and migration routes of the peoples that live in the areas of retreat. It is highly probable that individual groups of the legendary Juezhi,[68] the Tocharians or the Indians arrived in this region on their forays, and that both skeletal remains of these early Nordic immigrants and other prehistoric remains may be found, as well as remnants of blood strains here and there in the current population ...
>
> It is now the anthropologist's task to conduct research into current ethnological conditions by means of measurements,[69] research into characteristics, photographing and taking casts (using Poller's method), particularly concentrating on collecting material on the proportion of population, the origins, significance and development of the Nordic race in this region. In addition, the steeply vertical structure already mentioned in the research area provides a rich field of evidence for investigation of the relationships between race and landscape. Chance may throw up the discovery of fossilised human remains, since it was immediately adjacent to the research area, on the fringe of the Eastern Asian mountain chains, that one of the most important human skull fossils, "Sinanthropus pekinensis", was discovered.[70]

66 10 March 1937, BA Koblenz, R 73/1498,. However, the files do not contain the expert's appraisal.

67 BA Berlin R 135/43 163381; Beger's research program in note form, BA Berlin, R135/43 163380; see also GREVE, 1995:173.

68 See for example, CHEN Chien-wen, Further Studies on the Racial, Cultural, and Ethnic Affinities of the Yuezhi. In: *The Bronce Age and Early Iron Age Peoples of Eastern Central Asia*. Vol. 2, Victor H. MAIR (ed.), Washington 1998:767-784.

69 In Germany too, SA troops had to undergo skull measurements in 1933, see Ernst NOLTE, *Streitpunkte* (Berlin, 1993), 65-66.

70 "Ziele und Pläne der unter der Leitung des SS-Obersturmführers Dr. Schäfer stehenden Tibet-Expedition der Gemeinschaft "Das Ahnenerbe", (Erster Kurator: Der Reichsführer SS)", submitted to the DFG by the Reichsgeschäftsführer (Reich Manager) of the Ahnenerbe on 3 December 1937, BA Koblenz R 73/1498, und BA Berlin NS 21/682. The archives of the Foreign Office contain a somewhat briefer working plan which the India Office ordered to be translated: "Aim and Plan of the Tibetan Expedition of Ernst Schäfer," 2) The anthropological-ethnological aim, Oriental and India Office Collections of the British Library London, (henceforth OIOC), L/P&S/12/4343, fols. 362-366.

Beger's program can be traced back to his teacher Hans F.K. Günther.[71] The question of whether traces of Indo-Europeans existed in Central Asia had long been a subject for debate[72] and was not restricted to National Socialism,[73] as shown by the international inter-disciplinary discussions still continuing on this subject today.[74]

But as the expedition's anthropological findings show, the search for the remains of Nordic immigrants did not play a further role:

> Ethnological and racial science studies were founded on research into the complex relationships of clashing racial circles and their wide-ranging influences in appearance and culture... In addition to categorising the research area in terms of ethnology and racial science and gathering a highly comprehensive collection of ethnological items (2000 numbered items), one of our tasks was to develop a clear picture of the racial composition of the human races that had infiltrated from other habitats. The Central Himalayan Sikkim and adjacent Tibet formed an area ideal in every way for this work, since many peoples scarcely known to racial scientists had settled there, cut off by mighty walls of rock... Investigations and measurements primarily concentrated on representatives of seven racially different population groups, and a number of casts of heads, hands and feet and facial masks were carried out in addition to dactyloscopic and blood group research, resulting in a further wealth of material from this sub-region.[75]

The DFG passed the working plan to leading scientists for their appraisal. The anthropological assessor was Eugen Fischer, head of the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut für Anthropologie. He seemed not to be overly impressed by the anthropological plans in his statement:

71 Hans F.K. GÜNTHER, *Die Nordische Rasse bei den Indogermanen Asiens: Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Frage der Urheimat und Rassenheimat der Indogermanen*. München 1934; see also: Albert von LE COC, Frühe Zusammenhänge zwischen der Kultur Mittelasiens und der der germanischen Staaten Europas. *Volk und Rasse* 1 (1926):247-256.

72 E.g. J.P. MALLORY, A History of the Indo-European Problem. *The Journal of Indo-European Studies* 1 (1973):21-65; ID.. *In Search of the Indo-Europeans*. London 1989: R. G. HARSHE, Mount Meru: The Homeland of the Aryans. *Vishveshvaranand Indological Journal* 2 (1964):135-161.

73 E.g. P.T. ETHERTON, Himalayas – Cradle of the Aryan Race. In: *The Last Strongholds*. London 1934:273-284.

74 E.g. the articles of Paolo Francalacci, Tongmao Zhao, Han Kangxin, Harold C. Fleming, in Victor H. MAIR (ed.), 1998; John V. DAY, *Indo-European Origins: The Anthropological Evidence*. Washington D.C., 2000; Spencer WELLS, *The Journey of Man: A Genetic Odyssey*. London 2002.

75 SCHÄFER, 1943:14.

> I cannot perceive the scope of the remaining work and its individual plans sufficiently to assess the extent to which the anthropological task, which can be considered extremely complex, can be fulfilled. In my view, only a relatively long period spent among the individual groups will suffice. I recommend consulting the experience of the anthropologist of the German Hindu Kush Expedition, Dr. Herrlich,[76] who lists the difficulties involved. Allow me to make a further technical remark: In my opinion the list of techniques and methods lacks the inclusion of handprints and fingerprints, although I do not have such a high opinion of casts as against photography, since in my experience the opposition of many subjects frequently jeopardises the remainder of the important work. I did not want to suppress these remarks for the benefit of the thing. The plan can therefore definitely be approved.[77]

Karl Beurlen, Professor at the University of Kiel Geological Palaeontological Institute and head of the Soil Research Department of the Reich Research Council, approved the geographical and geological plans under the precondition that appropriately qualified scientists would be chosen for the expedition.[78]

2.6 The "Ahnenerbe" (German Ancestral Heritage Society)

Negotiations on issues including financing had been prolonged until a memorandum by the "Ahnenerbe," dated August 1937 stated that the Reichsführer wished "the 'Ahnenerbe' to equip a new expedition to Tibet. The expedition is to be organised officially by the 'Ahnenerbe'."[79]

The "Study Society for Intellectual Primeval History, German Ancestral Heritage Society" ("Studiengesellschaft für Geistes-Urgeschichte, Deutsches Ahnenerbe"), founded in 1935 in Berlin by Himmler and others and renamed

76 See the precise report by Albert HERRLICH who also relativises the conclusions drawn from anthropological measurements: Beitrag zur Rassen- und Stammeskunde der Hindukusch-Kafiren. In: *Deutsche im Hindukusch: Bericht der Deutschen Hindukusch-Expedition 1935 der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft*, Arnold SCHEIBE (ed.), Berlin 1937:168-219. "We had difficulties in recruiting people for the measurements and we then had difficulties in carrying them out," p. 179.

77 Expert's report (Gutachten) by Eugen Fischer, 13 February 1938, BA Koblenz, R 73/1498. However, Beger evidently didn't get to know Fischer's recommendations nor Herrlich's experiences, (Interview on 6 December 2003), and was thus continually confronted with opposition by the inhabitants of Sikkim and Tibet of whom he wished to make casts. There was no question of taking measurements or casts of aristocrats.

78 Expert's report (Gutachten) by Karl Beurlen, 24 January 1938, BA Koblenz, R 73/1498.

79 Memo Sievers, 6 August 1937, BA Berlin, NS 21/682.

"Ahnenerbe" two years later,[80] initially occupied itself with subjects such as early Germanic history, runic research, the Atlantis myth and the "World Ice Theory". However, it was increasingly endeavouring to gain a foothold in the field of serious science, to extend its scope of study to focus on natural sciences and attract first-class scientists, so that it was concerned with both areas in parallel. In addition, Himmler constantly attempted to influence the work of the scientists involved when he discovered a topic which interested him.[81]

Evidently the "Ahnenerbe" had somewhat remarkable conceptions of the linguistic conditions in Tibet: "Schäfer shall be introduced to SS Hauptsturmführer Wüst, who is to give him instruction in linguistic matters (Sanskrit etc.). Furthermore, Schäfer should contact Dr. Scultetus concerning possible research into the World Ice Theory."[82] A memorandum from September 1937 makes clear that the "Ahnenerbe" continued to exert pressure concerning the membership of the expedition, now demanding that a geographer, anthropologist, geologist, botanist and representative of the World Ice Theory and prehistorian should be included.[83] Wüst also insisted that a philologist should also accompany the expedition – albeit a Sinologist, not a Tibetologist."[84]

However, given the difficulties caused by the Chinese authorities, in a meeting on 19 October 1937 Schäfer's representative Karl Wienert stated that the expedition would have to be restricted to Schäfer as head, Wienert as geophysicist, and a geologist, with the possible addition of a film camera operator. Wolfram Sievers, the Reichsgeschäftsführer (Reich Manager)," explained to Wienert that this restriction would prevent the specific desire of the Reichsführer

80 The standard work on the Ahnenerbe: Michael KATER, *Das "Ahnenerbe" der SS 1935-1945: Ein Beitrag zur Kulturpolitik des Dritten Reiches.*, 3. unveränderte Aufl. mit einem Nachwort zur 2. Aufl. 1997. München, 2001.

81 Helmut HEIBER, *Reichsführer! ... Briefe an und von Himmler*. München 1970.

82 Memo Sievers, 6 August 1937, BA Berlin, NS 21/682. Walther Wüst was on the one hand the "curator" of the "Ahnenerbe," yet at the same time still professor of Indology and Aryan philology at the University of Munich. He was elected President of the university in 1941.

83 Yet "Wüst should also be consulted concerning philological issues and the composition of the team, if necessary taking philological issues into consideration," Memo Sievers, 20 September 1937, BA Berlin, NS 21/165.

84 "The following people are recommended: Ernst Schlierlitz, Peking, in China for the past 8 years and a reader at the University there. Walter Fuchs, Mukden, also a reader at the University and considered the world's finest Sinologist. The curator of the Leipzig Museum of Ethnology, Wolfram Eberhard, currently on a research expedition in China, Memo Sievers, 26 September 1937, Betr.: Mitnahme eines Sprachwissenschaftlers auf die Tibetforschungsreise, BA Berlin, NS 21/682.

SS for the participation of a prehistorian and World Ice Theory expert from being fulfilled. SS-Obersturmführer Dr. Scultetus had to oppose Wienert's view that another expedition member could receive sufficient instruction on issues of the World Ice Theory to be able to complete the tasks planned."[85]

2.7 *Financial negotiations*

Schäfer continued his efforts to establish the financing of the expedition and carry through his research objectives.

At that time, one of the greatest problems was the procuring of foreign currency.[86] Schäfer was thus introduced to Hermann Göring through the agency of Himmler, at the Munich International Hunting Exhibition at the beginning of November 1937.[87] Unlike Himmler, who hated hunting and regarded official state hunting excursions as a perpetual torment, cherishing idealistic dreams of animal protection legislation,[88] Göring was an enthusiastic hunter and Reich Master of the Hunt. At Schäfer's special Tibet exhibition, Göring was shown extremely rare trophies and expressed an exclusive interest in the number of animals bagged. Schäfer seems to have made a good impression.

2.8 *Concessions*

Although Schäfer had succeeded in asserting his scientific freedom over Himmler,[89] his objectives and those of Himmler and the "Ahnenerbe" apparently

85 Memo Sievers, 19 October 1937, BA Berlin, NS 21/165.
86 Schäfer to Galke, 14 October 1937, BA Berlin, NS 21/682.
87 Memo Sievers, 4 October 1937, BA Berlin, NS 21/165.
88 KERSTEN, 1956:115-118.
89 "I was only able to take on the high degree of responsibility because the Reichsführer ... assured me with the utmost generosity that he would leave me free to organise and carry out the expedition after my 3-year experience in the wilds of East Asia. For I have undertaken the guarantee that the expedition must achieve greater success than all other research explorations of the same duration and the same number of members," Schäfer to Sievers, arrived at "Ahnenerbe" 27 December 1937, BA Berlin, NS 48/69, fol.113. Similarly in an undated letter to Beger from the end of December 1937: "And I set the yardstick for our coming expedition quite independently of other people or explorations... This independence awarded to me by the Reichsführer – and without which I would never have taken on the responsibility..," BA Berlin, R 135/43 fols. 163367-163370.

diverged more and more widely until Sievers, the head of the "Ahnenerbe", declared in January 1938 that "[t]he task of the expedition in the meantime had diverged too far from the targets of the Reichsfuehrer-SS and does not serve his ideas of cultural studies," because it would lie outside the scope of his work.[90] "The Reichsführer complied with Dr. Schäfer's request to be permitted to conduct negotiations himself concerning the expedition's financing and organisation. The 'Ahnenerbe' subsequently transferred the file to Dr. Schäfer."[91] And later: "At the request of the Reichsführer SS, SS Obersturmführer Schäfer's expedition was not conducted by the Ahnenerbe."[92] Thus, in the end, the expedition was *not* sponsored by the SS or the "Ahnenerbe". Doubtless financial factors also played a key role in the outcome of the decision. However, Schäfer continued to receive political support from the "Ahnenerbe" and Himmler. He was well aware of the fact that he was dependent on Himmler and was forced to accept compromises in order to retain Himmler's support with the English and obtain passports. Himmler gave his consent to the expedition on the condition that all of its members join the SS.

In preparation for the expedition, he had had "Schäfer Expedition 1938/39" letterheads printed and applied for sponsorship from businessmen. Schäfer was also forced to yield over the expedition's official title. In February 1938 Himmler decreed that on the orders of the "Ahnenerbe" the expedition's name would have to be changed to "German Tibet-Expedition Ernst Schäfer (in large print), under the patronage of the Reichsfuehrer-SS Himmler and in connection with the Ahnenerbe" (in small print).[93] This letter heading, in large, striking Gothic type, caused Schäfer considerable difficulties with the British authorities after his arrival in India. Even the German Consul-General in Calcutta included a pointed criticism in his report to the Foreign Office that the letterhead had been counter-productive and had immediately generated mistrust with the English.[94] The consequence was that Schäfer ordered new, discreet letterheads in Antiqua typeface, evidently while still in Calcutta, which stated "Deutsche Tibet Expedition Ernst Schäfer." During the expedition he used only this and his original "Schäfer Expedition" paper. Schäfer actually raised the funds of his expedition himself, albeit with the support of the "Ahnenerbe".

90 Sievers to Wolff, 23 January 1938, BA Berlin, NS 21/682.
91 Memo Sievers, 9 March 1938, BA Berlin, NS 21/165.
92 27 May 1938, BA Berlin, NS 21/682.
93 Memo Sievers, 9 March 1938, BA Berlin, NS 21/165.
94 Podewils to Foreign Office, Berlin, 11 June 1938, BA Berlin, ZM 1457 A.5, fols. 47-48.

He received the sum of 30,000 Reichsmark (RM) from the DFG.[95] The final statement dated 15 November 1940 shows that the Public Relations and Advertising Council of German Business (Werberat der deutschen Wirtschaft) bore the majority of the costs, with a contribution of RM 46,000. In return for supplying reports for the newspapers *Völkischer Beobachter* and the *Illustrierter Beobachter*, their publisher Eher Verlag paid the sum of RM 20,000; RM 7,000 came from the Foreign Office, and a further 6,500 RM from private donors including Brooke Dolan.[96] The costs totalled RM112,111. Only the hasty return flight from India as the outbreak of war became imminent was financed by Himmler's "circle of friends."[97]

2.9 *Change of Plans*

Political conditions in Eastern Asia finally compelled Schäfer to change his expedition plans. After receiving information that there was no possibility of gaining access via China, or by flying over the Sino-Japanese battle lines from Japan or via French Indo-China and Yunnan, regions which had previously been spared in battle, Schäfer had no choice but to attempt to reach Tibet from British India, there negotiating with the British rulers. Even Wilhelm Filchner believed Schäfer would never obtain an entry permit to Tibet from British India, particularly if the English learnt that the expedition would be composed of SS members, and "Personal Staff of the Reichsführer" at that.[98]

Carrying a dinner-jacket and tails in his luggage and a wallet full of letters of recommendation, Schäfer left for London in March 1938 to begin cautious investigations regarding permits and to obtain letters of recommendation. At this stage he already faced the consequences of Hitler's policies; he met Sir John Anderson, the Lord Privy Seal and former Governor of Bengal, on the very day of the annexation of Austria, and was met with an icy refusal. Nevertheless, Schäfer was given important letters of recommendation to Sir Aubrey Metcalfe, the Indian British Foreign Minister, and Sir Robert Reid, his successor in Bengal

95 Mentzel, President of the DFG to Schäfer, 8 March 1938, BA Koblenz, R 73/1498 and BA Berlin, NS 21/682.

96 BA Berlin, R 135/5, fol. 150165.

97 For Himmler's circle of friends, see: Reinhard VOGELSANG, *Der Freundeskreis Himmler*. Göttingen, 1972.

98 BA Berlin, R135/38, fols. 34a-35a.

and Assam, and had an impressive and effective meeting with old Sir Francis Younghusband.[99]

2.10 Members of the expedition

The expedition comprised five members: Schäfer as mammologist and ornithologist, Ernst Krause, entomologist, photographer, film camera operator and ethnologist, Karl Wienert, geophysicist, and Edmund Geer, technical caravan leader. To give an outline of Bruno Beger, the anthropologist and student of Hans F.K. Günther: he was strongly influenced by the racist anthropology of Nazi ideology that prevailed at the time. However, his actions in Tibet regarding measuring people's skulls and taking masks of their faces was actually within the bounds of international scientific practice of the era; the Schlagintweits had made casts as early as the mid-19th century, and Gordon T. Bowles, the American anthropologist on Schäfer's first Tibet expedition, had also taken casts for his doctorate in Harvard,[100] as had Giotto Dainelli's anthropologist Biasutti[101] and many more. However, Beger's anthropological measurements of prisoners in Auschwitz[102] five years later cast the expedition in a dubious light and contributed to its controversial image.

3. The expedition

3.1 Outset and political obstacles

The expedition was finally able to start for Calcutta via Colombo in April 1938.

99 Library of Congress, Reel 491.

100 Gordon T. BOWLES, *Racial Origins of the Peoples of the Central Chinese-Tibetan Border*, PhD Thesis Harvard: Cambridge, Mass., 1935.

101 R. BIASUTTI, Osservazione Anthropologiche Eseguite da G. Dainelli su Cachmiri, Ladachi e Nubrese (1930). In: *Spedizione Italiana de Filippi nell' Himalaya, Caracorùm e Turchestàn Chinese (1913-1914)*, Serie II, Vol. 11, Giotto DAINELLI (ed.), Bologna 1933:193-267.

102 See Landgericht Frankfurt a. Main, Case 4KS 1/70, Judgment 6 April 1971, appealed to Bundesgerichtshof, Case 2 StR 293/72, Judgment 22 March 1973; see also Irmtraud WOJAK, Das 'irrende Gewissen' der NS-Verbrecher und die deutsche Rechtssprechung: Die 'jüdische Skelettsammlung' am Anatomischen Institut der 'Reichsuniversität Straßburg'. *Jahrbuch zur Geschichte und Wirkung des Holocaust* (1998/1999):101-130.

However, political reality caught up with them on their arrival. When they left, the National Socialist propaganda newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter* had printed an article headlined: "SS Expedition Leaves for Uncharted Regions of Tibet." An article in the *Börsen Zeitung* was also carefully noted.[103]

The Indian *Statesman* immediately printed the article, but under the headline "Nazi invasion – Blackguards in India". This would cause Schäfer enormous problems during negotiations with the English over entry permits for Sikkim and Tibet.

The German Consul-General in Calcutta, Count Podewils, expressed unusually open and direct criticism to the Foreign Office.[104] In addition, Himmler himself wrote a letter to his friend Admiral Sir Barry Domvile, which also came to the attention of the India Office, in which he expostulated:

> I cannot imagine that the authorities are so stupid as to see in the scientist Dr. Schäfer, officially dispatched by me, as spy. For the English Secret Service cannot believe me to be so foolish as to despatch such a man officially and under my name if I was really engaged in espionage. I can in any case give the assurance in regard to Schäfer and his expedition that none of the men concerned have any duty whatever to perform outside their scientific activities.[105]

While Himmler's intervention was initially successful, the suspicion of the English had now been awakened in earnest. Sir Aubrey Metcalfe, Foreign Secretary

103 "On April 21st the exploration party of the German Schäfer Expedition will leave Genoa on the SS Gneisenau so as to reach India before the monsoon. This large-scale expedition is under the patronage of the Reich S.S. Leader and will be carried through entirely on SS principles. It has been organized by the Tibet explorer Dr. Schäfer who will be making his third great journey of exploration," OIOC, L/P&S/12/4343, fol. 333.

104 "... I attribute the refusal primarily to the reason that the expedition was overly presented as an SS enterprise. The known fact that the English consider the SS to be a police and espionage organisation could not do otherwise but cause the expedition's scientific goals to be regarded as a mere pretext and scent political objectives in the background. The detailed article in the Völkischer Beobachter of 20 April, 'Expedition into the Uncharted Regions of Tibet, Research Expedition with the Support of the SS Reichsführer and Völkischer Beobachter' was as unhelpful in this context as the letterhead 'Deutsche Expedition Ernst Schäfer, Unter der Schirmherrschaft des Reichsführers der SS Himmler und in Verbindung mit dem Ahnenerbe e.V. Berlin,' which had been used prior to the expedition's departure. Naturally, the English learnt of all this immediately and became suspicious, so that not only the 'London Times', but also the local press published notes pointing out the expedition's connection to the SS," Podewils to Foreign Office, 11 June 1938, BA Berlin, ZM 1457 A5, fols. 47-48.

105 Himmler to Domvile, 18 May 1938, OIOC, L/P&S/12/4343, fols. 264-265; BA Berlin, ZM 1457 A5, fols. 78-79.

of the Government of India, reacted immediately, writing to Lord Linlithgow, Viceroy of India, on 25 May 1938:

I understood from Halifax that Himmler, who is personally interested in Schäfer's expedition, is inclined to complain that attitude of H.M.G. has been obstructive in the matter. There is of course no substance in this complaint. Schäfer originally desired to take his expedition to Eastern Tibet which is a question for Tibetan Government and not for us. All possible steps were nevertheless taken by the Government of India to expedite transmission of his application and to examine alternative plans which Schäfer subsequently put forward in case of a Tibetan refusal, and Schäfer ought naturally to have awaited a reply before expedition started. Nevertheless, in view of Himmler's interest, it is politically desirable to do anything possible to remove any impression that we have put obstacles in Schäfer's way.[106]

And Hugh Richardson, Gyantse Trade Agent, was instructed to refrain from creating obstacles.[107]

In the meantime, Schäfer had been informed by the Consul General of the Tibetan government's refusal:[108]

29th Day of the 2nd Tibetan month of the Earth-Tiger Year, (29 April 1938)

from the Ministers of Tibet, Lhasa, to Dzasa Rai Bhadur Norbhu Dhondup, C.B.E., British Trade Agent, Yatung, British Mission, Lhasa.

You recently called on the Kashag and required whether there is any objection to give permission to a German party including Dr. Schafer and 4 others to visit the Eastern Kham via

106 Metcalfe to Linlithgow, 25.5.1038, OIOC, L/P&S/12/4343, fol. 295.

107 "For reasons connected with the international situation His Majesty's Government are anxious that Schäfer, in spite of his cavalier behaviour, should be treated with all possible consideration and that the German Government should have no grounds for thinking that Government of India are being obstructive. You should, therefore, in passing on his request to Sikkim Government, make it clear that Government of India attach importance to permission being granted and you should overcome any reluctance which Durbar may show unless you are satisfied that they have really valid grounds for objecting. 3. Please convey message from Foreign secretary to Schäfer expressing regret at his disappointment about Tibet and pointing out that question of entry into Tibet is one for the Tibetan Government alone and that the GOI can only transmit applications, which they did promptly to Schäfer's case. You might also explain to him the reluctance of the Tibetans to have European expeditions in their country and necessity which our friendly political relations with them imposes on the GOI for observing the scruples in the matter. 4. about Assam, Naga Hills... Sikkim however, seems to be the least objectionable solution and you should do your best to satisfy him with that," External Affairs Department to Secretary of State for India, repeating telegram to Richardson, 28 May 1938, OIOC, L/P&S/12/4343, fols. 290-291.

108 Podewils to Foreign Office, 11 June 1938, BA Berlin, ZM 1457 A5, fol. 45,

> Sang Dzong and Rima on a scientific expedition. We would now inform you that if a foreigner is allowed to visit Tibet, applications are received one after another from more foreigners for similar permission which is very embarrassing to the Tibetan Government. It is therefore requested that the party may please be asked not to undertake the proposed visit and our refusal of the application be explained to them in the best possible manner so that they may not be offended.[109]

This refusal was consistent with the Tibetan government's customary behaviour.[110] Nevertheless, the disappointed and impatient Schäfer driven by factors including the early onset of the monsoon season, acted against the express instructions of the Consul General and the Foreign Office and applied to various levels in order to obtain some kind of permit, creating some confusion by doing so.[111]

When Schäfer noticed this, he immediately wrote an apology to Metcalfe:

> I have been informed that, through ignorance concerning the correct method of approach to the authorities in India in matters obtaining permits for travel, we may unwittingly (and greatly to our regret) created an impression of discourtesy. If this is so, we apologize most sincerely... To recapitulate: Our expedition is purely scientific and we are mainly interested in zoology, botany, and anthropology, geography and ethnology. The expedition is unofficial in character, and I, the undersigned, am personally responsible for it, financially and otherwise. I might add ... that our expedition has no political aim.[112]

Podewils wanted to support Schäfer's plans concerning Sikkim, inter alia because

> a sojourn of idleness in India on the part of the expedition, which is a costly affair requiring foreign currency, would hardly have been justifiable. Such an interruption would certainly have led to ill-feeling on the part of the Germans living and earning foreign currency here, and would also be difficult to reconcile with the urgent desire for action on the part of Schäfer and his comrades.[113]

In audiences with Sir Aubrey Metcalfe and Lord Linlithgow in Simla, Schäfer succeeded in initially assuaging the English concerns. He was particularly im-

109 OIOC, L/P&S/12/4343, fol. 280 and 309.

110 E.g. OIOC, L/P&S/12/ 4342, fol. 36; L/P&S/12/4263, fols. 51-52.

111 Podewils to Foreign Office, 11 June 1938, BA Berlin, ZM 1457 A5, fol. 45; ibid. to Schäfer, 26 July 1938, fol. 40; ibid to Foreign Office, 26 July 1938, BA Berlin, ZM 1457 A5, fol. 33.

112 Schäfer to Metcalfe 29 May 1938, BA Berlin, ZM 1457 A5, fols. 50-51.

113 Podewils to Auswärtiges Amt, 11 June 1938, BA Berlin, ZM 1457 A5, fols. 45-46.

pressed by Metcalfe,[114] to whom he owed his meeting with Lord Linlithgow the next day.[115]

> The Viceroy emphasises heavily that even English scientists are not permitted to work in Tibet and that he thus believes the submission of another application to the Tibetan government to be completely futile. He would be prepared to give me permission to stay in Sikkim for six months,[116] but I must undertake not to cross the Tibetan border without official permission."

Nevertheless Metcalfe declared his willingness to direct a further application to the Tibetan government, although Schaefer found the conditions decreed for a possible visit to Tibet, with which he was soon issued, to be unacceptable.[117]

3.3 Invitation from the Tibetan government

His second attempt was also fruitless. Schäfer continued exploring a variety of new avenues.

In North Sikkim he had a chance meeting with the Chief Steward of the Taring Raja, the half-brother of the Maharajah of Sikkim, "who promised us to

114 Metcalfe "is a true gentleman and remained so to me even during the great conflicts that followed months later. A son of the Metcalfes is in Germany," Library of Congress, reel 492.

115 Schäfer had the impression that "hunting and fishing really seem to interest the Viceroy more than keeping the seething mass of the Indian people in order," ibid. However, he seems also to have had a personal interest in Schäfer, "His Excellency the Viceroy, who is taking a personal interest in the matter," Metcalfe to Podewils, 11 June 1938, BA Berlin, ZM 1457 A5, fol. 52.

116 Richardson soon reported: "Sikkim Durbar have agreed to permit Schäfer's expedition subject to a reasonable limitation of collecting birds which in view of Buddhist religious scruples and of general policy of preservation of wild life seems to be quite justifiable," Richardson to Foreign Office, 31 May 1938, OIOC, L/P&S/12/4343, fol. 275.

117 "a) To restrict the stay in Tibet to a duration of 6 weeks. b) to refrain from proceeding further than the cities of Yatung and Gyantse or deviating from the trade route. c) to refrain from hunting and fishing. d) to refrain from visiting monasteries and other institutions unless permission were granted by the requisite authorities. e) to be guided by the counsel of the British agents in Yatung and Gyantse in all relations with the Tibetans. f) to refrain from publishing anything concerning the Tibetan visit in the press or elsewhere without first gaining permission from the British Indian government, regardless of whether the material had been collected during the Tibetan visit or elsewhere. Tibetan feelings must not be insulted," Library of Congress, reel 492.

do his best with his important friends in Lhasa, Shigatse and Gyantse..."[118] and caused him to receive an invitation to Doptra from the Raja of Taring.[119] By accepting the invitation Schäfer tricked the British in a sense, following the personal advice of Francis Younghusband "to sneak over the border,"[120] since he would be obliged to cross the Tibetan border for some days. In Tibet he immediately established friendly contacts, and Taring promised to transfer Schäfer's entry directly to Lhasa. After returning to Gangtok, he drafted a flawless formal request to the Tibetan regent Reting Rinpoche, assisted by the private secretary of the Maharajah of Sikkim, two high-ranking Tibetan lamas and a Tibetan doctor.[121] Similar letters were also sent to the Prime Minister and the Kashag, and a long period of waiting began.

If Schäfer's changes of plans had already caused Gould to revise his opinion of him,[122] his prohibited border crossing[123] now generated sustained ill-feeling on the part of Richardson in particular,[124] despite an impressive and clear letter of apology written by Schäfer in which he attempted to explain his reasons and actions.[125] Gould gives this description of Schäfer's actions:

> Dr. Schaefer came to see me at Phari, and was with me during the days when the crisis was at its worst. He told me that his incursion into Tibet, to Doptra, had been undertaken by him, against the advice of his companions, because he had hopes that the 'King of Tering' would

118 Gould to Savidge 22 August 1938, OIOC, L/P&S/12/4343, fol. 208.

119 I cannot confirm whether he actually followed Podewils' alleged advice, "to provoke an invitation from a neighbouring Tibetan prince, thus creating a new situation for him and for us". Since relations with Podewils were strained, this could be a retrospective justification by Podewils to demonstrate his share in the expedition's success, for Schäfer's relationship with the Consulate General was a somewhat tense one. Auswärtiges Amt to the Chef des persönlichen Stabes des Reichsführers SS, 24 April 1939, BA Berlin, NS 19/1053, fol. 2.

120 Ernst SCHÄFER, *Über den Himalaya ins Land der Götter*. Durach, 1989:8-9.

121 Gangtok in Sikkim on the thirteenth day of the seventh Tibetan month, Library of Congress, reel 491.

122 "The fact that Dr. Schäfer proposes to visit Lhasa and probably also Shigatse, seems to indicate that his present objects are those of the tourist, and possibly of the politician rather than those of the natural scientist, on which hitherto he had laid stress..." Gould to Savidge 22 August 1938, OIOC, L/P&S/12/4343, fols. 208-209.

123 "Schäfer has visited Tering Raja for three nights at Dobtra, 25 miles NW of Kampa Dzong. He has thus committed offence under Regulation 5 of 1873," Gould to Savidge, 11 September 1938, OIOC, L/P&S/12/4343, fol. 195.

124 Bodleian Library, MS. Or. Richardson 27, fol. 6.

125 Schäfer to Richardson, 8 November 1938, Bodleian Library, MS. Or. Richardson 27, fols. 3-4.

be in a position to help him get to Lhasa. Actually Raja Tering much resented the visit, and feared that the Lhasa government might find some unpleasant method of indicating its disapproval. Actually the Tibetan government would not appear to have heard of the episode. Schaefer proved to be quite a pleasant companion, and was my guest also on the way back to Yatung and at Yatung... Actually Schaefer is perhaps nervous that if he fails to get all he asks for his credit in Germany may wane. In the event of a negative reply from the Tibetan government on the subject of the proposed visit to Lhasa, I should communicate the reply to Herr Schaefer, or inform you of the reply in the first instance. I have no present means of knowing what the reply of the Tibetan Government is likely to be. I do not know what were their motives in giving permission to Tucci; but I do know that the permission to Jack and Shepheard was due to the fact, acting under a complete misapprehension, Norbu pressed for permission.[126]

However, this time Gould's worries concerning a possible Tibetan refusal proved superfluous, and after a telegraph from Richardson,[127] Schäfer received, via Gould, an official letter of invitation with five seals from the Kashag which stated:

To the German Doctor Saheb Sha-phar:

Thank you for your letter of the 17th day of the 9th of the English month together with two boxes containing a gramophone, records and two pairs of binoculars.

Concerning you and the other Germans, Doctor Wienert, Mr. Krause, Mr. Beger, and Mr. Geer (altogether no more than five persons) who want to visit Lhasa and the holy Tibetan monasteries, please understand that no foreigners whatsoever are allowed to enter Tibet.

Although we know if we allow you to enter, others might come the next time, it nevertheless appears from your letter that you intend only friendship and to see the holy land and its religious institutions. Acknowledging this, we deign to give you permission to go to Lhasa and to stay there for two weeks, on condition that you oblige yourself not to harm the Tibetan people and consent to not hunt any birds or game, which would deeply hurt the feelings of the Tibetan people, both clergy and lay. Please kindly keep this in mind.

Sent from the Tibetan Kashag on the auspicious 3rd day of the 10th month of the earth-tiger year.[128]

And so Schäfer finally had his "official leave," albeit not from the English, but directly from the Tibetan government. In the broader geo-political context of the rather complicated relations between Britain and Tibet, it also probably demonstrated some Tibetan independence from the British. Schäfer considered this letter from the Kashag a minor sensation, as it was the first official invitation to

126 Gould to Savidge, 16 November 1938, OIOC, L/P&S/12/4343, fols. 193-194.

127 Richardson to Gould, 26 November1938, OIOC, L/P&S/12/4343, fol. 188.

128 Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, Cod. tibet. 536/1; Ernst SCHÄFER, 1943:162-163.

a German mission to Tibet, where many of his predecessors such as Sven Hedin and Wilhelm Filchner had failed. This said, in the previous year invitations to Lhasa had been received by an American couple, Suydam Cutting[129] and his wife, and by Theos Bernard.[130]

And yet the joy of receiving the invitation was not completely unclouded. Although the Kashag's letter contained no such warning, Richardson had written to Gould: "They [the Kashag] informed me verbally that they have given permission for fourteen days to visit Lhasa on condition that it is a pleasure trip only and with usual ban of shooting etcetera."[131] Metcalfe therefore warned Schäfer:

> ... They have stipulated that your visit must be only a pleasure trip and in the circumstances I am sure you will understand that it will not be possible for you to carry out any meteorological or survey work, as the Tibetan Government would be likely to be resentful if they found that any such scientific work had been done without their express permission.[132]

Schäfer, dependent on scientific success, understood that this was a bitter blow to the fundamental objectives of his expedition, and that he would at best be able to pursue only limited activities, as he repeatedly wrote to Stresemann.[133] For this reason he complied only partially with the instructions. Wienert conducted geomagnetic investigations only at night, Beger refrained from taking anthropological measurements in Lhasa, instead concentrating on medically treating patients, completing the ethnological collection and collecting fossils.[134] As they had brought no weapons of any kind into Tibet, Schäfer was reduced to killing birds for his collection with a catapult at night, also dissecting them by night. At

129 Suydam CUTTING, In Lhasa – the Forbidden. *Natural History* 37 (1936):103-126; ID., *The Fire Ox and Other Years*. London 1947:173-246.

130 Theos BERNARD, *Land of a Thousand Buddhas: A Pilgrimage into the Heart of Tibet and the Sacred City of Lhasa*. New York 1952.

131 Richardson to Gould, 26 November 1938, OIOC, L/P&S/12/4343, fol. 188. Schäfer to Metcalfe, 1 December 1938, ibid., fol. 185.

132 Metcalfe to Schäfer, 6 December 1938, OIOC, L/P&S/12/4343, fol. 189.

133 "In my view, the prime value of this journey to me will be to become acquainted with the various regions in Tibet and on its borders, thus enabling me to draw genuinely justified conclusions," Gyantse, 6 January 1939, and "The success, all in all, is quite magnificent, even though I was obliged to curtail my zoological activities," Shigatse,15 May 1939, Schäfer to Stresemann, Nachlass Stresemann II.

134 BA Berlin, R 135/66, fol. 163403.

the same time, he recognised his historic opportunity, adapted his plans and attempted to make his stay in Lhasa a success.

3.3 In Lhasa

While in Lhasa, Schäfer successfully extended the mission's stay several times, so that they were able to stay a full two months in Lhasa instead of two weeks. Schäfer witnessed the Mönlam festival and gave a most vivid and extensive description of it. The members of the expedition established official contact with the Kashag ministers and the Reting Regent. They also made contact with many aristocratic families. The person who fascinated them – as all foreigners – the most was Dzasa Tsarong, whom they thought to be the only true politician. And their Tibetan interpreters were even ordered a short biography of him to be composed,[135] having interviewed him for that purpose. However, their most valuable informant, with whom they met almost every day, was Möndro (Mundo, Mendong), a high monk official who had been one of the four boys sent to Rugby school in England in 1913. Möndro was responsible for the police force, but he had been degraded from the 4th rank after his motorbike caused a Kashag minister's horse to shy and throw him off.[136]

A particularly positive influence on their relations with the Tibetans was that Bruno Beger, the expedition's anthropologist, had undergone brief medical training that enabled him to treat members of the Tibetan aristocracy successfully.[137] Every morning people queued in front of the government guesthouse where Schäfer and the other men were staying. Thus the expedition members were frequently invited into the houses of the nobility. To the chagrin of Beger, who had not sought this occupation, his success also generated envy among the English, who regarded him as competition.[138] But even when his arts could not help, he was presented with rich gifts.

In return for his medical treatment of the famous Pha-la family, they were even awarded a complete copy of the Lhasa Kanjur, the transport of which re-

135 BA Berlin, R 135/30/31.

136 BEGER, 1998:181; F. Spencer CHAPMAN, *Lhasa the Holy City*. London 1938:85; David MACDONALD, *Twenty Years in Tibet*. London 1932:220.

137 BEGER, 1998:155-193 passim.

138 BEGER, 1998:193; BA Berlin R 135/39, fol. 86d; See also Alex MCKAY, Swastikas, Medicine and Tibet. *Wellcome History* 20 (June 2002):10-12.

quired nine mules.[139] The special nature of this gift can be seen by drawing a comparison with the American Buddhist Theos Bernard,[140] who described himself as the "White Lama" and had visited Lhasa one year before, endeavouring without success during this time to purchase a Kanjur.[141]

Schäfer was also clever enough to create the idea of a shared collective identity of Germans and Tibetans by exploiting the Swastika, introducing the motif of a meeting of the Eastern and Western Swastika and thus forging a link between the two nations even at symbolic level. Since he was aware that the swastika is an ancient auspicious symbol frequently encountered in Tibet, albeit there without the importance or significance assumed by Schäfer, he continually used it as a successful link for conversations about its origins and history, such as "The private secretary of the Maharajah of Sikkim, a witty fellow, finally declared that we Germans are inferior to the Tibetans in many respects, for we only ever wear a single swastika on our sleeves, while high-ranking Tibetans have dozens of swastika ornaments on their clothing."[142]

To present a credible reason for his intention of travelling to the Yarlung Valley,[143] he deliberately instrumentalised the symbol and claimed simply that the swastika had been brought to Germany from that site 5000 years before.[144] However, some time elapsed until the Tibetans believed his story[145] and issued the special permit.[146]

He also established common ground and similarities between Tibetans and Germans in other respects, and was unsurprised to learn that Tibetans considered themselves superior in many ways to Europeans.[147] Although the Tibetans knew little of Germany and its geographical location, asking, for example, whether Germany was near America,[148] Schäfer succeeded in impressing them with enthusiastic descriptions of German inventions, such as stones made from air (artificial gems from IG-Farben), clothing from wood (viscose) and medical advances, and pre-

139 BEGER, 1998;186-187.

140 On Theos Bernard, see also: James COOPER, Theos Bernard: 'Fact and Fiction'. *Tibetan Review* 21 (April 1986):11-15, and OIOC, L/P&S/12/4203.

141 BERNARD, 1952:159, 175, 236, 263.

142 Library of Congress, reel 491.

143 Schäfer had obtained the tip from Albert Herrmann, Berlin, BA Berlin, R 135/39, fol. 33c.

144 BA Berlin, R 135/39, fol. 6a.

145 BA Berlin, R 135/39, fol. 32a.

146 Gould to Savidge, 5 March 1939, OIOC, L/P&S/12/4343, fol. 168.

147 BA Berlin, R 135/40, fol. 40d.

148 BA Berlin, R 135/39, fol. 33a.

sented Germany to the Tibetans as a technologically progressive and innovative country.

3.4 The Reting Regent and his letters

In his diaries Schäfer gives a lively and detailed account of his meetings with the Regent, Reting Rinpoche, telling us that although the rule was that requests for an audience had to be submitted at least three days in advance and that even the prime minister had to wait a long time, Schäfer himself was soon able to have an audience whenever he liked. Though Richardson told Schäfer that Reting Rinpoche would only grant "ten-minute audiences,"[149] Schäfer succeeded in staying with the Regent for more than three hours. During the German's visits, the Regent would be sitting on his throne bed together with his favourite dog. A young boy he described as his "favourite", the son of the new Kashag minister, was always present. Reting was dressed in a yellow suede coat, with many German pistols and two golden Belgian pistols hanging above him. According to Schäfer he knew little about the outside world, and also little about Buddhism. Schäfer was very keen to learn more about Buddhism and was rather disappointed that Reting could not, or would not, respond to his curiosity.[150]

Schäfer at first appeared to be impressed by the personality of the Regent, his contemporary in age. Schäfer invited him to Germany and they seriously discussed plans for the journey, as several other aristocratic young men also wanted to travel there. Reting wanted to be picked up by a German plane in Calcutta and flown to Germany,[151] but apparently the Kashag would not give consent to the trip. Gradually, however, Schäfer's initial impression of the Regent became increasingly negative, as the Reting Rinpoche was apparently constantly seeking some benefit from their contact.[152] The language and style of Schäfer's diaries in descriptions of his audiences with Reting also undergoes a striking

149 Library of Congress, reel 492.

150 BA Berlin. R 135/39, fol. 6a.

151 BA Berlin, R 135/39, fol. 5d.

152 See also Richardson: "The Regent is governed by self-interest. He has no fixed policy and his actions are dictated by momentary considerations. The misfortune of Tibet lies in the fact that although there are many officials who may disagree with some of his actions, there is no determined opposition," in Report on Tibetan Affairs from October 1938 to September 1939, OIOC, L/P&S/12/4165, fol. 90b; On Reting, see also Wangchen Gelek SURKHANG, Tibet: The Critical Years (Part III). "The Reting Rinpoche". *The Tibet Journal* 8 (1983):33-39.

negative change. He wrote of no other Tibetan in this way. However, this applies only to the diaries; his publications presented a wholly positive image of Reting.

Reting must also have been very fond of Bruno Beger, whom he wanted to engage as a bodyguard, and Beger experienced some difficulty in withdrawing from this situation without offending the Regent. Reting suggested that Beger stay in Tibet[153] and that a Geshe go to Germany in exchange, in order to introduce Buddhism there.[154] This may have been the first official attempt by the Tibetans to spread Buddhism in Europe.

But the most famous, if not the most important, outcome of the expedition is the letter the Regent wrote to Hitler (cf. figs. 1 & 2). Schäfer obviously persuaded the Reting Regent to write a letter to Hitler, although Reting probably had little idea of who Hitler was.

Why would Schäfer have been interested in such a letter from Reting? There is no hint in his diaries, so that we must rely on suppositions. Schäfer did not know Hitler personally, and the expedition was unconnected with him, since Hitler had no interest in Asia and may even have been unaware of the expedition.

However, pressure from the British authorities increasingly drove Schäfer to equate the success of his expedition with success for Germany; he felt himself under extreme pressure to succeed, and was obsessed with the idea of producing positive results to enhance the expedition's prestige. Since in Lhasa the pursuit of his personal research goals was possible only to a limited extent, he was obviously forced to seek additional proof of his success.

But why did Reting write the letter? Schäfer had probably given the impression that he carried far more political weight than was actually the case. And Reting may have thought that establishing contact with Germany's *rgyalpo* and expanding Tibet's foreign policy contacts could do no harm.

The envelope of the letter is addressed:

> To his Majesty Herr Hitler, Berlin, Germany
> *'Jar man rgyal po har hi ti lar mchog la 'bul*
> *rgyu bod kyi rgyal tshab srid skyong rwa greng ho thog thus*
> *sa yos bod zla chig 1 tshes 18 bzang bor phul*

153 BEGER, 1998:160.

154 BA Berlin, R135/39, fol. 1b.

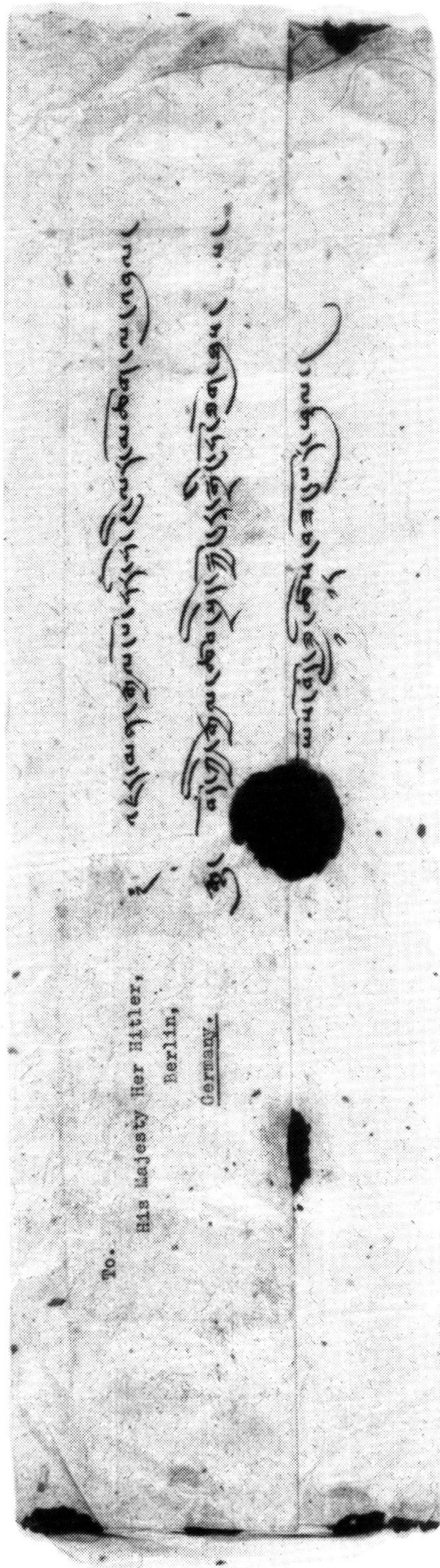


Fig. 1: Reting Rinpoche, Regent of Tibet, to Hitler, 8 March 1939. Envelope. © Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München.

Fig. 2: Reting Rinpoche, Regent of Tibet, to Hitler, 8 March 1939. Letter.
© Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München.

The letter in the original accompanying translation[155] reads:

To his Majesty Fuhrer Adolph, Hitler, Berlin,
Germany.

From.
The Regent of Tibet.
On the 18th day of the first month of Sand-Hare Year.

Your Majesty,
I trust your Highness is in best of health and in every progress with your goodly affairs.

Here I am well and doing my best in our religious and Government affairs.

I have the pleasure to let Your Majesty know that Dr. Schaefer and his party, who are the first Germans to visit Tibet have been permitted without any objection, and every necessary assistance is rendered on their arrival. Further, I am in desirous to do anything that will help to improve the friendly tie of relationship between the two Nations, and I trust your Majesty will also consider it essential as before.

Please take care of Your good self, and let me know if Your Majesty desire anything.

I am sending under separate parcel a Tibetan silver lid and saucer with a red designed tea cup, and a native dog as a small remembrance.

Sincerely Yours,
Reding Ho-Thok-Thu.[156]

155 The translator was most probably Ringang, the youngest of the four "Rugby boys" sent to school in England in 1913. He was the most intelligent of the boys and stayed in England until 1924 to study later engineering. He was in charge of the hydro-electric power-station in Lhasa and becoming also the Tibetan government's official translator, see Tsering SHAKYA, Making of the Great Game Players: Tibetan Students in Britain Between 1913-1917. *Tibetan Review* 21 (January 1986):9-14, 20. A superficial comparison of translations of Tibetan letters to Suydam Cutting, (For which I am grateful to Valrae Reynolds of Newark Museum), shows that the translations of Cutting's correspondence were very similar to those of Reting's letters, and Cutting also specifically mentions that the letters to him were translated by Ringang, see CUTTING, 1947:176; see also CHAPMAN, 1938:82-84.

156 Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, Cod. tibet. 535 and 535 a; as early as 1950 there were photographs of both letters, translations and envelopes "uncovered in Vienna", in the American National Archives II, Washington, Records of the Army Staff, Record group 319.12.3, Ernst Schafer Expedition to Tibet.

3.5 Analysis of the letter to Hitler

As Tibetan diplomatic correspondence follows strict rules, upon visual inspection it becomes clear that the lines run too close to the margin. There is no space of respect between the inscriptio and introduction. The spacing between the lines is too wide. And only the envelope bears a seal, not the letter itself. However, why was the letter written on such a small sheet of paper, yet in such a large envelope? Why is the paper so thin? Why is there no seal on the letter itself, but only on the envelope? Why, on the other hand, is the accompanying translation on such exquisite paper? After Panglung Rinpoche and Hanna Schneider had kindly examined the letter, their unanimous verdict was that the letter could not possibly be the original, for precisely the reasons given. It can only be a draft or a copy. But where is the original? Did Reting deliberately place a mere copy in the impressive envelope? Or did Schäfer have a copy made and keep the original for himself? But Schäfer writes that he received an envelope with five seals. This question will probably never be answered until the Lhasa Archives, where we may hope to find the original, is fully opened to scholars.

A comparison with other types of letter reveals that the letter is no more than a typical example of formal Tibetan courtesy correspondence. Clearly, no political or other interesting matters are mentioned.

While the question of content is relatively easy to answer, the matter of style is a far more complex one. I know neither of other letters to further Western rulers from this period which would serve as a basis for comparison, nor of any other letters written by Reting. In addition, the letter-writers never quote any example of correspondence with Western authorities.[157]

However, why does the letter contain no flowery adjectives describing Hitler's attributes, and why are the other sections of the letter also free from the polite circumlocutions customary in Tibet? Hanna Schneider, the expert on Tibetan correspondence, comments:

> While the inscriptiones found in letters to addressees within Tibetan society, whatever their rank, are characterised by extreme courtesy and considerable verbosity, the inscriptiones, and indeed the entire sample letters, for correspondence to the "outside world" are generally composed with remarkable brevity and precision. If we compare the inscriptio of Reting's

157 Hanna SCHNEIDER, The Formation of the Tibetan Official Style of Administrative Correspondence (17th –19th Century). In: *Tibet and her Neighbours*. Alex MCKAY (ed.), London 2003:117-125: 122.

letter with those of letters to other *rgyal-po's*, the phrasing of the inscriptio in Reting's letter does not overstep the bounds of protocol.[158]

Nevertheless, several subtleties of phrasing indicate that Reting was evidently uninterested in creating a good impression and making his mark, or in flattering Hitler in any way. The impression remains that he was not impelled to write the letter by his own interests but was persuaded to do so, and thus adopted a style with a minimal level of courtesy.

Yet why is there a second letter, dated eight days later, that differs only in the description of the gifts? Schäfer's diaries clearly reveal his annoyance over the pettiness of Reting's gifts, particularly compared to the gifts from the Kashag Ministers: "impudently offering very poor gifts about which we only can be very angry."[159] He complained to Major Bista, the Nepalese representative, saying he would be "standing between the horns of a bull, on the one side the Regent to whom he could not return the tea-cup, and on the other side Hitler, where he would cut a very poor figure because of [Reting's] great boundless impertinence."[160] Reting apologised for the ridiculous gifts and tried to find other gifts, asking to have his first letter returned.[161] But Schäfer pretended that he had already sent the letter to Calcutta.[162] At the farewell audience he received a new letter and additional, although not greatly different, presents; he was presented with a gold coin, a robe of a monk official and a mastiff instead of an *apso*.[163]

3.6 *Gifts*

To what extent do the accompanying gifts reflect the state of the relationship between Reting and Schäfer? Was Schäfer after all right to be so angry about the shabbiness of the Regent's gifts and issue a complaint? This episode is doubtless a unique event of embarrassment and discourtesy in the history of Tibetan-European relations. Since the Tibetans had a highly sophisticated system of awarding

158 Hanna Schneider, personal communication, 7 October 2002.
159 BA Berlin, R 135/39, fol. 81d.
160 BA Berlin, R 135/39, fol. 85a.
161 R 135/39, fol. 86d.
162 R 135/39, fol. 87a.
163 "In the afternoon we visit the Regent for the last time and receive a letter and a new gift for the Führer," 14 March 1939, BA Berlin, R 135/40, fol. 8b.

gifts, and gifts most definitely expressed the degree of a friendship or relationship, I would dare to contend that Schäfer was right. What is my evidence?

We are fortunate that the Munich Ethnological Museum has in its possession a faded list hand-written by the anthropologist Beger, minutely detailing each one of the ethnological collection of over 2000 items bought by or presented to the expedition, and listing their dates, origins, places of purchase and prices.[164] On examination, this list reveals some exciting discoveries; it contains several farewell gifts presented to the expedition by members of the Kashag, nobles and the Regent himself from the beginning of March 1939. It is possible to identify the precise degree of warmth in the relationship between Schäfer and the members of the Kashag; for example, Schäfer wrote that he enjoyed a particularly good relationship with the Kalon Lama, and indeed the Lama's gifts, including two evidently valuable *thangkas*, have a total value of 428 rupees. The Senior Kashag was described by Schäfer as sceptical or critical of him, and his gifts bear this out, with a total value of a mere 26 rupees. However, the value of the Regent's gift to Hitler, the silver teacup, was listed by Beger as only 18 rupees, although he does not note the additional gift of the lama's robe mentioned in the second letter. As a comparison, Schäfer had previously presented the Regent with the following gifts: Meissner porcelain, precious stones from IG Farben, optical equipment, a case of medicines and – immediately upon his arrival – a radio set.[165]

Whether the modest nature of the Reting's gifts to Hitler could have been caused by Schäfer's refusal of Reting's requests for arms deliveries from Germany will probably never be clarified.[166]

3.7 Departure

After their extended stay in Lhasa the expedition was eventually granted permission to visit the Yarlung valley, the first Europeans ever to do so.[167]

164 I am grateful to Bruno Richtsfeld, Munich Ethnological Museum, for saving this informative list before the ink faded into illegibility, taking the trouble to type it up and kindly making it available to me.

165 Geer, settlement of accounts for the DFG, 21 October 1940, BA Koblenz, R 73/1478.

166 BEGER, 1998:194; SCHÄFER, *Unpublished Memoirs*. Although two years later Schäfer contradicts himself for political reasons: BA Berlin, NS 19/2244, fol. 8.

Given the ever more critical political situation and "with his wireless only working irregularly and the most alarming news coming through,"[168] Schäfer's nervousness grew, and he scented danger in every rumour,[169] to which Gould took up a position.[170] Nonetheless Gould and also Metcalfe showed much understanding for Schäfer.

Metcalfe summarised his impressions of Schäfer in a long note on a conversation with Schäfer:

> My general impression of him was, as before that he is ingeniously interested in science more than politics, that he is excitable and possibly at times unbalanced, but that he is anxious to be on good terms with us and is grateful for the assistance given to him. In spite of his professed Nazi sympathies, I should not regard him as generally hostile either to the Govt. of India or to the British,[171]

and

> the only general comment which I have to make is that Dr Schaefer impressed both his Excellency and myself as being hysterical rather than hostile...[172]

The expedition ended in a hasty retreat to Sikkim when Schäfer finally realised on reading a letter from his father that given the imminent threat of war, it would be wise to return to Germany as rapidly as possible.

Upon the completion of the expedition Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy of India, received Schäfer in a private audience in Simla.[173] Lord Linlithgow congratulated Schaefer on his great success. Moreover, referring to Schäfer's political skills, he told Schäfer that he himself at the same age would have acted just as Schaefer had done.

The Viceroy explained the British view of Germany to Schäfer in a very frank manner and asked him to transmit a personal message to Hitler. Shortly

167 "Richardson also launched extensive intrigues against our trip to Jalung-Phodrang and asked the Kashag why we were treated thus, 'We are suffering from the B.'," BA Berlin 135/40, fol. 10d.

168 Gould to Savidge, Camp Dochen, 24 June 1939, OIOC, L/P&S/12/4343, fols. 51-59.

169 Schäfer to Gould, OIOC, L/P&S/12/4343, fols. 102-104.

170 Gould to Savidge, 12 June 1939, OIOC, L/P&S/12/4343, fols. 86-87.

171 Metcalfe, 18 July 1939, OIOC, L/P&S/12/4343, fols. 43-46.

172 Metcalfe to R.T. Peel, 25 July 1939, ibid., fol. 42.

173 "I take the liberty of expressing to your Excellency my most sincere thanks for your great kindness in granting me an interview and interesting yourself in the various point to be cleared up," Schäfer to Linlithgow, 21 July 1939, OIOC, L/P&S/12/4343, fol. 28.

after his return Schäfer tried to see Hitler, but to his great disappointment Himmler prevented him from doing so.[174]

On one of their last days in Calcutta, Schäfer had the honour of speaking at the British Himalaya Club, where he gave an account of his scientific findings.[175] After the applause had died down, the President, Mrs. Townsend, thanked him, saying

> This good-will lecture should have been held simultaneously in Berlin and London. Nothing remains but for us to pray for understanding between our peoples.[176]

Schäfer thus returned to Germany in a mood of relief after this success and his final audience with the Viceroy in Simla.

From Calcutta the expedition first took a British Airways flying-boat to Baghdad, which developed engine trouble and was forced to make an emergency water landing in Karachi. In Baghdad they were fortunate to be able to continue to Athens in a Lufthansa JU 52, learning a few hours later that the British Airways flying boat had sunk off Alexandria. A surprise awaited them in Athens, where they were issued with a special brand-new Reich government machine in which to return to Germany.[177]

4. Germans – Tibetans – English

During the expedition's stay in Lhasa, its status was affected to some extent by Richardson's disapproving attitude. Hugh E. Richardson (1905-2000)[178] was initially appointed British Trade Agent in Gyantse in 1936 by his superior Basil J. Gould, Political Officer for Sikkim, with the aim of consolidating British influence against the presence of the Chinese in Lhasa. He came to Lhasa in 1936 as one of seven members of what was known as the Gould Mission, and when Gould returned to Sikkim in February 1937,

174 SCHÄFER, *Unpublished Memoirs*.
175 BA Berlin, R 135/30/12.
176 SCHÄFER, *Unpublished Memoirs*.
177 SCHÄFER, *Unpublished Memoirs*.
178 On Richardson see Claire FREEMAN In: *Seeing Lhasa: British Depictions of the Tibetan Capital 1936-1947*. Clare HARRIS and Tsering SHAKYA (eds.), Chicago 2003:148-151.

> he informed the Tibetan cabinet that Richardson would remain behind in Lhasa to discuss various outstanding matters. Richardson thus became Head of the British Mission Lhasa. Yet the appointment was never officially notified or covered by any legal definition or diplomatic agreement – theoretically at least, the mission was a temporary one. For the Tibetans the British mission served as a useful channel to communicate with the outside world, and they accepted its presence as a counterbalance to the Chinese mission. Richardson's main duties were twofold. Firstly he sought to develop personal friendships with influential Tibetans and to persuade them that their best interests lay in alliance with the British, rather than other powers. Secondly he was charged with the duty of gathering all kinds of information about Tibet, in particular political matters, and reporting on these to his government.[179]

After Richardson left the civil service in 1950 he embarked on his second career, concentrating on Tibetan history and becoming "the greatest living authority on the subject, 'the father of modern Tibetan studies.'"[180] Richardson evidently continued to regard the expedition as a bête noire well into his later years, and his depictions of the Schäfer expedition, coloured by his personal experience, considerably influenced international opinion.[181]

As Richardson's personal records, letters to his parents, memoirs and diary reveal, he had opposed the expedition from the outset[182] because of his antipathy to Nazi Germany.[183] However, he received the one and only personal message from Viceroy Lord Linlithgow,[184] in which he was instructed to refrain from creating obstacles. Richardson was commanded to keep the expedition under observation.[185] Furthermore, Gould and Richardson pressed Schäfer into

179 Alex MCKAY, The Role of Hugh Richardson in Tibet. *Journal of the Tibet Society and Relief Fund of the United Kingdom* 43 (2001):8-9.

180 Alex MCKAY, *Tibet and the British Raj: The Frontier Cadre 1904-1947*, Richmond 1997:222.

181 E.g. Hugh RICHARDSON, Unpopular Nazi in Tibet. *Himal* (Sept./Oct. 1997):5; ID. and Christoph BAUMER, Hugh Richardson – Zeuge des unabhändigen Tibets, *Tibet Aktuell* 62 (Sept. 1999): 10-15.

182 "I have been against the trip from the start," Bodleian Library, MS. Or. Richardson 3, fols. 167-168; see also 1, fols. 137-138; 2, fol. 96; 27, fol. 6-7.

183 "1938/39 was not a time for friendly feelings towards Germany...," Bodleian Library, MS. Or. Richardson 2, fol. 96 and "We had a tremendous argument after dinner and told them exactly what we thought of Germany," ibid. 3, fol. 156.

184 Bodleian Library, MS. Or. Richardson 2, fol. 96.

185 See also Richardson: "I hope to get back in good time to keep an eye on them," Bodleian Library, MS. Or. Richardson 3, fol. 156. Schäfer even writes that Lord Linlithgow in his final audience revealed to him what Schäfer had suspected for a long time: Richardson had been sent to Lhasa in order to prevent the expedition's advance there, SCHÄFER, *Unpublished Memoirs*.

employing the Sikkimese Rabden Kazi, whom they charged to spy on the expedition, as interpreter.[186]

After an initial personal meeting between Richardson and Schäfer in Darjeeling and a longer meeting in Gyantse shortly before the expedition's arrival in Lhasa in January 1939, it was clear that here were two characters who could not be more different[187] and Richardson's disapproval was joined by a personal antipathy.

Schäfer repeatedly yet vainly attempted to establish good relations with Richardson,[188] soliciting understanding for his situation.[189] However, as far as could be seen, the attitude of Richardson, relatively soon triggered a change in Schäfer's political thinking and views. Richardson's accusations, sometimes including personal attacks on Schäfer over Hitler's policies, seemed to have driven Schäfer into an increasingly National Socialist attitude. As Metcalfe reports, Schäfer deliberately provoked Richardson by making National Socialist statements.[190] Schäfer's methods included seeking to explain the World Ice Theory to Richardson, of all people.[191]

The beginning of the expedition's stay in Lhasa was dogged by the following episode, a source of much bitterness to its members and to Schäfer in particular:

The Kashag had sent word to Schäfer enquiring about the expedition's precise time of arrival, since a great reception was to be prepared for them in Lhasa.

186 "Rabden Kazi had received instructions to report most minutely on all the expedition's intentions and conversations, for we were under political suspicion, we were capable of anything and two of us would be capable of toppling Sikkim and transforming it into a German colony!" 26 December 1938, BA Berlin, R 135/38, fol. 41d.

187 "... Since from the outset I have felt that I could never make my peace with Richardson, the born pedant and bureaucrat, I treat him with the greatest forbearance, answer his highly detailed questions as correctly as possible without betraying my inmost thoughts, and desire only that our paths may diverge as soon as possible. When two such extremes collide, things simply cannot go smoothly. ... First of all Richardson, as he has already done with Beger and Wienert, bombards me with countless regulations and prohibitions," Library of Congress, reel 492.

188 Bruno Beger also confirmed this to me several times in an interview on 6 December 2003.

189 For example in a letter of Schäfer to Richardson, 8 November 1938, Bodleian Library, MS. OR. Richardson 27, fols. 3-4.

190 "He expressed enthusiasm partly 'to get a rise' out of Mr. Richardson, who had rather annoyed him on more than one occasion," Metcalfe, 18 July 1939, OIOC, L/P&S/12/4343, fol. 46.

191 Bodleian Libray, MS. Or. Richardson 2, fol. 96.

On the morning of their arrival, 25 miles outside Lhasa, they were surprised to see Richardson and Clifford on horseback, dressed in Tibetan clothing and overtaking them at great speed in the direction of Lhasa, greeting them with no more than a 'Hallo' without stopping. Previously in Gyantse, Richardson had informed them that he would leave Gyantse and arrive in Lhasa some days after them. Now he and Clifford had ridden for four days and nights almost continuously in order to arrive in Lhasa before them[192], exploiting the time to persuade the Kashag of Richardson's views. "Later a high Tibetan official reported to me that on his arrival Richardson had set all possible levers of blackmail and conspiracy in motion to render us untenable in every respect to the Tibetan government."[193] As a consequence, to the great disappointment of all members of the expedition the reception in Lhasa was not nearly as splendid as originally announced.[194]

While the expedition was staying in Lhasa, Richardson's many contacts had already enabled him to attain an influential position in that city. It is thus easy to imagine Richardson's suspicion of the contacts developing between the Germans and influential Tibetans, and his fear of the potential disruption to his circles that these contacts might cause.

Even though the Germans' reputation with the Tibetans was enhanced by the fact that the Tibetans were still suffering from the consequences of the English Younghusband expedition of 1904, the competition between English and Germans already highlighted by Richardson before the expedition's arrival in Lhasa evidently placed the Tibetans in an uncomfortable situation.[195] As the competition between the two groups increased, Tsarong was finally driven to enquire in concern of Rabden, interviewing him for his biography, "whether relations between the Germans and English really were good. When Rabden affirmed this, Tsarong folded his hands, prayed and said, 'The two great nations must keep peace with each other; if there is another war between them, the world

192 Bodleian Library, MS. Or. Richardson 2, fol. 96.

193 Library of Congress, reel 492. Richardson evidently informed Gould later that Schäfer had arrived in Lhasa without prior warning, as was his wont, Gould to Savidge, 12 June 1939, OIOC, L/P&S/12/4343, fol. 86-87.

194 BA Berlin, R 135/38, fol. 74c.

195 Schäfer repeatedly notes that they had better seats at events, BA Berlin, R135/39, fol. 50a, 50d, 56a; Schäfer mentions that the new Kashag Minister kept Richardson waiting and received the Germans to an audience first, ibid fol. 33b. Richardson would even claim later that Germans and English were enemies and demand that the two nationalities should be seated separately at a Chinese festival, ibid. fol. 85c.

will be destroyed.'"[196] According to Schäfer the Tibetans were afraid even to visit Germany for fear of experiencing complications with the English.[197]

4.1 *Controversial points*

One of Richardson's major criticisms was that the prestige of the Europeans[198] in Lhasa was undermined by the expedition members' appearance and style of dress.[199] However, the Tibetans appear to have taken a more easy-going attitude to the issue, as the report of Tsewang Pemba – the only Tibetan to my knowledge that mentions the Schäfer expedition – amusingly shows.[200]

An event exaggerated principally by Richardson, who refers to it again and again,[201] occurred when Schäfer had evidently been taking photographs too openly in Lhasa in the Mönlam crowds and was hit on the head by a stone from the crowd. Schäfer took this as an excuse to dramatise the occurrence by sporting an outsize bandage, to coerce the Tibetans into awarding him a further permit for Shigatse to appease their conscience. In general such an event did not seem to be too much out of the ordinary, since the Tibetans comforted Schäfer on all sides by saying that others had had the same experience. In the previous year Theos Bernard had had to flee from the stones of the crowd while taking photographs,[202] as had allegedly Charles Bell, Richardson himself and the former Chief of Police Laden-La.[203]

196 BA Berlin, R 135/39, fol. 74b.

197 BA Berlin, R135/ 39, fol. 71a.

198 On the important role of prestige for the British officials in Tibet, see Alex McKAY, 1997:143-147.

199 Their beards were a particular cause of irritation to Richardson, so that he advised all later travellers to shave because the Germans had created the impression that any man with a beard was a godless German or a Russian, Bodleian Library, MS. OR. Richardson 2, fol. 94.

200 ".... The riders, however, were distinctively not Tibetan! They had blond hair, blue eyes and dirty unkempt beards. Hunched over their saddles, the three of them, with a Tibetan rode into the place. We learnt that they were Germans. I think they were probably anthropologists or entomologists of some sort. The British were always conscious of maintaining their prestige in Tibet, and wherever they went it was due to pomp and ceremony. They would not dream of putting in such a ragged appearance as these Germans," Tsewang PEMBA, *Young Days in Tibet*. London, 1957:125-126.

201 OIOC, L/P&S/12, 4165, fol. 93v; Bodleian Library: MS. Or. Richardson 2, fol. 98; 27, fol. 6.

202 BERNARD, 1952:210-211.

203 BA Berlin, R135/39, fols. 282, 339-341; see also CUTTING, 1947:232.

But the Tibetans, were also susceptible to rumours[204], as Tsewang Pemba remarked after the stone-throwing incident:

> After this incident rumours started to fly about thick and fast. It was said the Germans had radioed to Germany to send heavy bombers to blast Lhasa, and for that fear of this the Lhasa Government had made an official apology.[205]

A central criticism, particularly by the English, of Schäfer's expedition was that he had killed so many birds in Tibet for research purposes. However, the expedition had brought no weapons from Sikkim to Tibet,[206] and Schäfer had bagged all the birds with home-made catapults, generally after dark.[207] Schäfer's use of the catapult had doubtless frequently injured the feelings of the Tibetan population, particularly when he killed birds near a monastery. And yet he was not an exception, for the English[208] and Tibetans also hunted, principally in Eastern Tibet.[209] F.M. Bailey had ordered 3000 birds to be collected in Nepal for scientific purposes.[210] Joseph Francis Rock collected 1600 bird study-skins for the Geographic Society in 1923 [211] and over 700 in the first season of 1928,[212] and

204 Bodleian Library, MS. Or. Richardson 3, fol.168.

205 Tsewang PEMBA, 1957:126.

206 SCHÄFER, *Unpublished Memoirs*. This is also indicated by the fact that Richardson coloured with rage when Schäfer told him that he had nevertheless received a pistol as a gift from a Tibetan official in Gyantse, BA Berlin, R135/40, fol. 8b.

207 Also intimated by the following: "After crossing the Gurka-la, one evening we saw hundreds of eared pheasants, and after a long debate with our great lama general he agreed to a carbine ball, with which Geer shot one of the birds. ....It is now the month of Gautama Buddha's birth, and I was even obliged to desist from using the catapult, although by now I have almost everything and am specialising in breeding biology," Schäfer to Stresemann, Gyantse, 6 June 1939, Nachlass Stresemann II; BA Berlin, R 135/40, fol. 55.

208 Alex MCKAY, The Other 'Great Game': Politics and Sport in Tibet, 1904-1947. *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 11 (1994):372-386.

209 Toni HUBER, Traditional Environmental Protectionism in Tibet Reconsidered. *The Tibet Journal* 16 (1991):63-77; ID., The Chase and the Dharma: The Legal Protection of Wild Animals in Pre-modern Tibet: In: *Wild Animals in Asia*,. Copenhagen NIAS, (in press); ID., Territorial "Sealing" (rgya sdom-pa): A Religio-Political Practice in Tibet. In: *Tibetan Studies*. Elliot SPERLING (ed.), Bloomington (in press).

210 Stresemann to Schäfer, 3 June 38, 1938, Nachlass Stresemann II.

211 S. B. SUTTON, *In China's Border Provinces: The Turbulent Career of Joseph Rock, Botanist Explorer*. New York 1974:19.

212 SUTTON, 1974:190. See also Suydam Cutting on Herbert Stevens having collected 1150 birds and small mammals, CUTTING, 1947:148.

Roy Chapman Andrews collected 800 birds in Mongolia.[213] Among the Tibetans in Lhasa, Minister of Finance Jigme Taring was particularly known for his passion for hunting, a legacy of his English upbringing and the cause of much sorrow to his wife.[214] Despite the ban on hunting in and around Lhasa, he added to Schäfer's zoological collection without the latter needing to fire a shot, and even donated wild geese, enjoyed by the Shapes in the form of "Ragout chinoise" when the Germans issued an invitation to the Kashag ministers.[215] In addition, Schäfer paid high prices in Lhasa for birds killed by Nepalese poachers.[216] Although the majority of the Nepalese were Buddhists, they seemed not to be very popular with the Tibetans because of their poaching activities.[217]

4.2 Impression of the expedition

Richardson, who was forced to admit that "... although our outward relations with all the Shapes are cordial and although none has ever given the slightest indication that our presence is anything but welcome we cannot claim to have any enthusiastic supporters in the Kashag at present,"[218] seems to have portrayed the expedition in a particularly negative light for reasons including the enhancement of his personal prestige and that of the English:

> From the Tibetan point of view the visit was marred by the killing of birds and by an incident which might have had very serious results when the German party made themselves conspicuous at the New Year's ceremonies and were stoned by the monks. In spite of temporary unpleasantness the visit has probably produced results of lasting value to us. By their dress, beards, and behaviour the Germans so stressed the difference between themselves and us that they created an unfavourable impression in Lhasa and in the great monasteries, and by contrast heightened our prestige. Several officials volunteered comments on their lack of manners and their untidy dress and they annoyed the whole official caste by asking their Sikkim clerk could be made a member of the exclusive Fourth rank. I have heard from sev-

213 GALLENKAMP, 2001:69.
214 Rinchen Dolma TARING, *Daughter of Tibet*. London, 1970:99-101.
215 SCHÄFER, *Unpublished Memoirs*.
216 BA Berlin, R 135/39, fol. 33b.
217 BA Berlin, R135/39, fol. 31c; see also CHAPMAN, 1938:93-94.
218 Richardson, Report on Tibetan Affairs from October 1938 to September 1939, OIOC, L/P&S/12/4165, fol. 93a.

> eral sources that they look on us with considerable favour, and that since the visit of Dr. Schaefer's party our prestige has gained considerably.[219]

However, the impression left by the expedition cannot have been so terrible, as Norbu Dhondup, Richardson's representative in Lhasa, reports on a letter by the Kashag concerning the Tibetans' prayers for a speedy end to the war: "In my opinion, they [the Kashag] took great care in wording the letter as they did not mention it explicitly that they wished an early victory in our favour. It is quite possible that remembering the recent visit of Dr. Schaefer and party, they considered it unadvisable to commit themselves in any way."[220] As late as 1942 Norbu Dhondup noted with concern: "Recently the Tibetan Government have ordered several religious ceremonies to be performed in which prayers have been offered for the early cessation of the international crisis in general, and for the safety of Tibet in particular. It will be remembered that in the last war the late Dalai Lama ordered prayers for the success of the allied arms. I cannot find that this has been done during the present war, though I have no doubt Tibet wishes the Allies victorious."[221] Heinrich Harrer reports on the expedition in his memoirs: "I never knew Ernst Schäfer personally, although I frequently encountered the names of the five members of his expedition when in Lhasa. They had gained great popularity. I was often called upon to translate the instructions in the numerous packages of medicines which they had left."[222] According to Schäfer, who placed great importance on the impression created with the Tibetans and thus repeatedly attempted to change his perspective, the Tibetans regarded his expedition thus:

> Möndro then tells us that everyone likes us and that we have made the best possible impression on the Potala; that our cheerfulness, fun and honesty is generally admired.[223]
>
> We are given the compliment in Phalas that the ministers are full of praise for us, for there were white men who had not learnt Tibetan customs in years, while we had already proved to be masters of Tibetan etiquette.[224]

219 OIOC, L/P&S/12/4165, fol. 93b.

220 Norbu Dhondup, Confidential Report for November 1939, 8 January 1940, OIOC, L/P&S/12/4165, fol. 80.

221 Norbu to F. Ludlow, 18 May 1942, OIOC, L/P&S/12/4201. Even Richardson was shamefacedly obliged to admit this, MS. Or. Richardson 2, fol. 100. See also a street song on Richardson, in Heather STODDARD, *Le mendiant de l'Amdo*. Paris 1985: 225.

222 Heinrich HARRER, *Mein Leben*. Berlin, 2002:204. He expressly confirmed this in an interview with Roger Croston on 7 May 2003.

223 BA Berlin, R 135/39, fol. 54a.

> If the English could see our relationship with the Tibetans, they would turn green with envy; we immediately won all hearts by calling out interjections and cheering, and they all applaud us; of course, we have no prestige to lose.[225]

Even if these accounts are as exaggerated as those of Richardson, the impression left on the Tibetans by the expedition is probably somewhere between the two extreme viewpoints of Richardson and Schäfer.

5. Conclusion

Although this expedition was planned along purely scientific lines, it was ineluctably drawn onto the political stage by the tensions of global politics at the time. England's suspicions were primarily aroused by the late revelation that the expedition's participants were members of the SS and by the many changes from the original destination of Eastern Tibet necessitated by political conditions in Asia. These suspicions then multiplied when Schäfer finally headed for Lhasa. Schäfer, who was under enormous pressure to deliver a spectacular success to his country, grasped the unique historical opportunity of paying an official visit to the forbidden city and making Lhasa itself his destination, although by doing this he was forced to renounce many of his original research goals for Tibet. Despite his continuous desperate attempts to convince the English to recognise the expedition as a scientific, not a political enterprise, he achieved only partial success. The assumption that the expedition was of a political nature occupied English government circles until 1943.[226] For the Tibetans the expedition appeared to have no further consequences and, like most other visits by foreigners, to be hardly worth mentioning. There are only intimations that the Tibetans regarded the English in a somewhat more critical light as a result of the Germans' visit. In Germany the imminent outbreak of war meant that the expedition had no further consequences for political or diplomatic relations of any kind between Tibet and Germany. However, given the changes in the political situation after the outbreak of the Second World War, the Foreign Office soon developed plans for an espionage expedition to Tibet which actually matched the original suspi-

224 BA Berlin, R 135/39, fol. 66a.

225 BA Berlin, R 135/40, fol. 42d.

226 OIOC, L/P&S/12/4343, fols. 9-18.

cions of the English regarding Schäfer's expedition: secret, political, military. But that is quite another story.

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